the weekly Standard

OCTOBER 18, 2004

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JOHN KERRY'S ROCK STARS
DAVID SKINNER

When a Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss

REALITY TV COMES TO THE ARAB WORLD

by Matt Labash

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★	5PM	WOLF BLITZER REPORTS
★	7PM	ANDERSON COOPER 360°
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The Washington Post

HOME EDITION

Inside: Home, local news Extra
Today's Contents on Page A2

35¢

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 7, 2004

U.S. 'Almost All Wrong' on Weapons

Report on Iraq Contradicts Bush Administration Claims

Four-column, front-page lead headline in the *Washington Post*, October 7

"An Oct. 7 article and the lead Page One headline incorrectly attributed a quotation to Charles A. Duelfer, the chief U.S. weapons inspector in Iraq. The statement, 'We were almost all wrong,' was made by Duelfer's predecessor, David Kay, at a Senate Armed Services Committee hearing Jan. 28."

—Small-print, Page Two correction in the *Washington Post*, October 8 ♦

That Was Then

In a *Washington Post* op-ed piece that ran September 19, 2002, Senator John Edwards of North Carolina deliberately misled the American people about Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction, and insisted that the United States be prepared to undertake unilateral, near-term military action against Iraq, even if it meant defying the U.N. Security Council and alienating our closest European allies.

That, at least, is how THE SCRAPBOOK figures Edwards would nowadays be heatedly denouncing his very own two-year old *Post* essay—if only someone from the Bush administration had signed it. THE SCRAPBOOK, by contrast, is firm. We don't flip-flop. You know where we stand. Put simply: We liked Senator Edwards's *Post* piece then . . .

> Our national security requires Congress to send a clear message to Iraq and the world: America is united in its determination to eliminate forever the threat of Iraq's weapons of mass destruction. . . . Congress needs to act now to make clear to our U.N. allies and to Iraq that the United States will not stand for the usual half-measures or delaying tactics. . . .
>
> Here's what I believe the resolution should say. First and foremost, it should clearly endorse the use of all necessary means to eliminate the threat posed by Saddam Hussein's weapons of mass destruction. Second, the resolution should call for an effort to rally the international community under a U.N. Security Council mandate. . . . [but] we must not tie our own hands by requiring Security Council action. Congress should authorize the United States to act with whatever allies will join us if the Security Council is prevented from supporting action to enforce the more than 16 resolutions against Iraq. . . .
>
> Thousands of terrorist operatives around the world would pay anything to get their hands on Saddam Hussein's arsenal and would stop at nothing to use it against us. America must act, and Congress must make clear to Hussein that he faces a united nation.

And we still like it. ♦

Briefly Noted

"Documentary" filmmaker Michael Moore is currently embarked on a nationwide, 60-city "Slacker Uprising Tour" designed to encourage college students to vote. Provided, of course, that they attend a school willing to pay Moore his mandatory $27,500 speaking fee, in the absence of which he will naturally be forced to take his tour elsewhere. Don't get us wrong, though: Fully-paid-up student bodies get more than their money's worth. Specifically, Mr. Moore has late-

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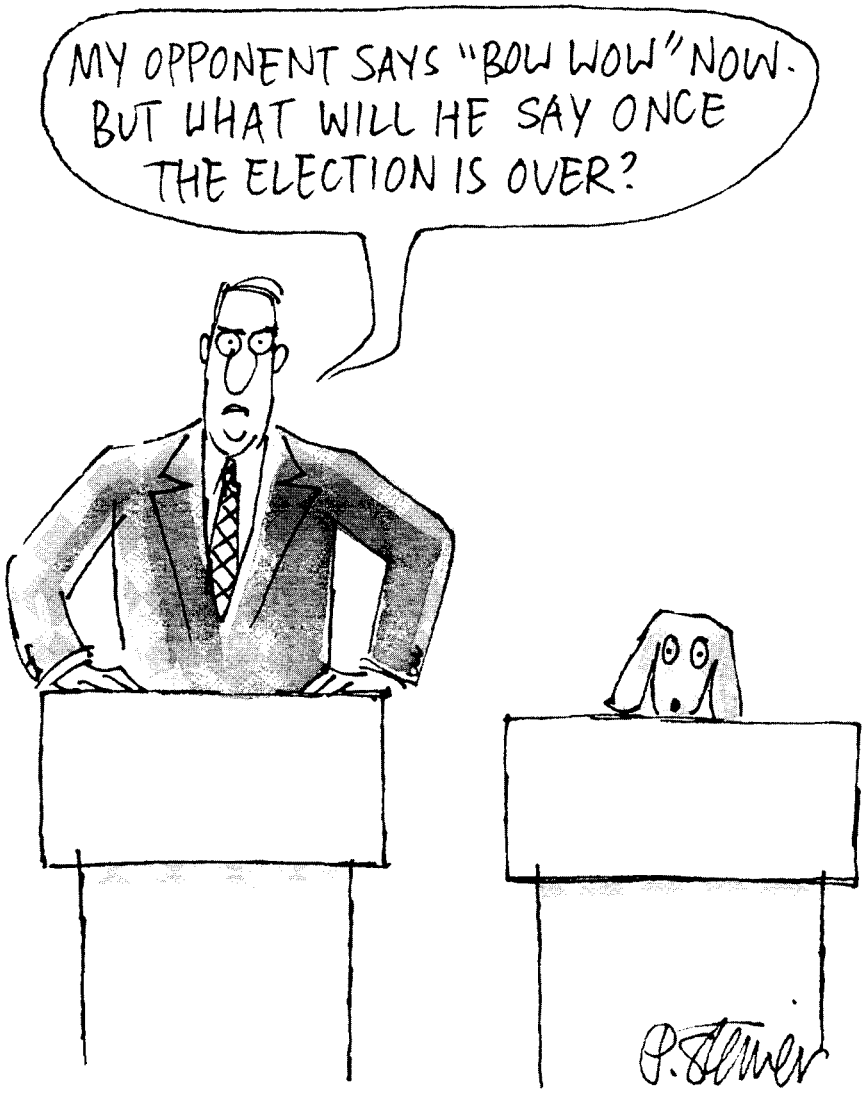

ly been awarding those male members of his audience who promise to vote next month a package of Hanes-brand underpants (briefs, not boxers; you had to ask?), while distaff youngsters who take the same pledge for some reason get ramen noodles instead.

It remains unclear whether Mr. Moore's disparate treatment of potential voting registrants represents an equal protection violation under the Supreme Court's *Bush* v. *Gore* precedent. But the Michigan Republican party isn't inclined to await the results of federal litigation on the question. They want Moore locked up lickety-split—and have asked four Michigan county prosecutors to investigate the possibility—for violating the vote-purchasing ban in their state's election code.

Moore is defiant. "I intend to keep distributing a free, clean change of underwear to all slackers and college students who promise to vote in this election," he says. "It's ironic that Republicans have no problem with allowing assault weapons out on our streets, yet they don't want to put clean underwear in the hands of our slacker youth."

Course, if he just took a moment during his speeches to explain to the kids how to use a washing machine he'd probably save a lot of dough. ♦

Network News Blues

The top anchors from all three of the nation's broadcast television networks appeared together on October 2 at the New York Public Library for a panel discussion moderated by *New Yorker* media columnist Ken Auletta. CBS's Dan Rather was twice asked for comment on his recent participation in an anti-Bush smear involving forged documents. He twice declined to respond, citing CBS's ongoing "internal investigation." The only Bush-related news-judgment error by CBS that Mr. Rather was prepared to concede was . . . he hadn't been tough enough on the president about Iraq back when the whole thing might have been prevented. "I should have . . . had more courage," Rather said. "It takes tremendous strength—strength I didn't always have."

Here, ABC's Peter Jennings reluctantly agreed. "I know we weren't as on the ball as we should have been" about the war, Jennings offered by way of apology. Warming up to this theme, Jennings also admitted that "we were not quick enough to say [the Swift Boat ads] are demonstrably false." In other words, the regular network news divisions are, if anything, too *favorably* disposed towards George W. Bush. And anybody who tells you different is a crazy, right-wing liar. Lay off my friend Dan Rather, Jennings demanded; "I don't think you ever judge a man by only one event in his career."

Whereupon Dan Rather, "as his eyes visibly moistened, could be seen whispering, 'Thank you, Peter,'" and the audience of 500 burst into loud, sustained applause.

"Now we know that this is a 'Blue' room," Jennings observed into his microphone once the cheering had subsided, thereby inadvertently acknowledging that at this point, any support for Rather and CBS—including his own—is a de facto expression of loyalty to the Democratic party. ♦

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Casual

Paying Our Respects

F. Scott Fitzgerald would have us believe there are no second acts in American lives. But then, he never met Rodney Dangerfield.

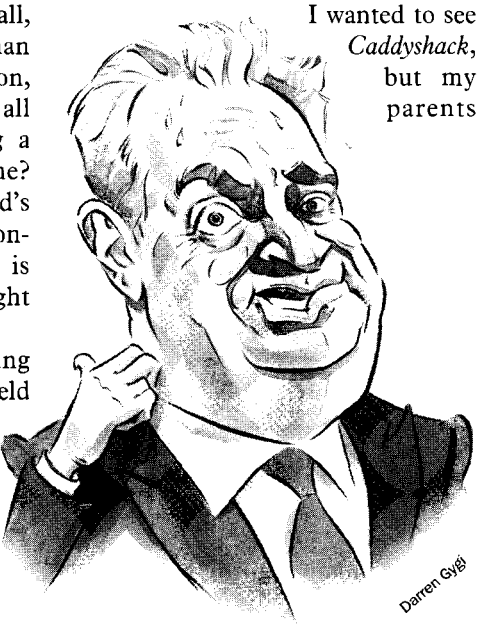
Dangerfield, who died last week at age 82, was the consummate late-bloomer. In that regard, his story was quintessentially American. After all, what could be more American than failing at your chosen profession, quitting at age 28, then starting all over again at 40 and becoming a multimillionaire household name? Rodney put the lie to Fitzgerald's dictum—and in the process confirmed one of George Eliot's: It is never too late to be what you might have been.

I know, I know. Associating Fitzgerald and Eliot with Dangerfield is like mixing Belvedere and Grey Goose vodkas with Budweiser. Rodney was Joe Six-Pack. He defined "unpretentious." He was just a charming, self-deprecating schlub who made an underdog image the centerpiece of his show business career.

That's why people loved him. And being lovable was a key to Rodney's success. He knew this. Consider the advice he offered to young comics in his autobiography, released earlier this year: "From the moment you walk onstage, try to make the people like you. That's the most important thing. If they like you, you can get a big laugh with a mediocre joke. If they don't like you, you've got some serious thinking to do about your career choice."

Audiences sure did like Rodney. He appeared on *The Tonight Show* a record number of times (more than 70). He won a Grammy in 1981. He received the Lifetime Creative Achievement Award at the 1994 American Comedy Awards. His famous getup—white shirt and red tie—is permanently displayed at the Smithsonian.

My introduction to Rodney came in the 1992 movie *Ladybugs*. It features Dangerfield coaching a girls' soccer team—not his most memorable role. Afterward, I wanted to see *Caddyshack*, but my parents felt some of the humor was, ahem, a bit off the fairway for a kid my age.



When I finally did watch *Caddyshack*, I understood why it turned Rodney into a big-screen star. His character, the über-rich loudmouth Al Czervik, is brilliant. Or, more accurately, *Rodney* is brilliant. His delivery and timing are perfect. He makes crass jokes laugh-out-loud funny.

This water-into-wine dexterity was a Dangerfield hallmark. So were his classic one-liners. Rodney told quick jokes—period. Jokes directed at, well, mainly his own personal shortcomings. Nothing preachy. Nothing political. Nothing about Democrats or liberals, Republicans or conservatives. *Everyone* could enjoy Rodney's humor—and just about everyone did.

He was a stand-up comic, but a throwback. Modern stand-up tends to be heavily cynical and dominated by topical (and often partisan) "observations." Think Jerry Seinfeld, Jon Stewart, Dennis Miller, Bill Maher, etc. That's fine. I love Seinfeld's shtick and think Miller is a riot. But what ever happened to plain-old joke-tellers? The Henny Youngmans? The guys who would get on stage and let fly with pithy one-liners?

Their breed—Rodney's breed—would seem hopelessly atavistic in today's stand-up market. Yet somehow, Rodney himself never did. He stayed hip into his 80s.

I always chalked it up to his self-mockery. Dangerfield was the king of self-belittlement, known above all for his "I get no respect" routine.

"When I started in show business," he'd say, "I played one club that was so far out, my act was reviewed in *Field and Stream*." Or he'd crack, "I'm not a sexy guy. I went to a hooker. I dropped my pants. She dropped her price."

Rodney had hundreds of lines like these. Here are two more: "My wife and I were happy for 20 years. Then we met." "I tell ya, I get no respect from anyone. I bought a cemetery plot. The guy said, 'There goes the neighborhood!'"

It was timeless, Everyman humor that had a universal appeal. Small wonder he influenced multiple generations of comedians. Jack Benny once told Rodney, "Your image goes into the soul of everyone." As Dangerfield himself put it, "I'm the masses."

It's inspiring to know Rodney's razor-sharp wit persisted through his final days. In late August, he underwent heart surgery at UCLA Medical Center. He then fell into a coma.

When he briefly emerged, reporters asked how long he'd be at the hospital. Dangerfield quipped, "If things go right, I'll be there about a week, and if things don't go right, I'll be there about an hour and a half."

He is an American icon. I'll miss his jokes a whole lot. We all will.

Duncan Currie

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Kerry's Carping

William Kristol's editorial, "Disgraceful" (Oct. 4), lives up to its name by failing to note that Prime Minister Allawi's "impressive speech" to Congress was likely drafted by political operatives for President Bush's reelection campaign.

Can we count on this prime minister to honor the election results here in America if Sen. Kerry wins?

Mike McCurry
Senior Adviser, Kerry-Edwards 2004
Washington, DC

William Kristol deftly presents George W. Bush as the guy who wants to win in Iraq, and John Kerry as the guy who wants to quit. But this formulation is too simple.

To be sure, Americans insist on winning wars above all else. Yet President Bush has raised considerable doubt about his ability to win this war. Let us be honest: Had Bush been a Democrat and performed this way, the polls wouldn't even be close. He would probably face talk of his impeachment.

If the case can be made that Kerry really wants to quit, that should assure a Bush victory. But Kerry and his new managers are no fools. They will work hard to convince voters that Kerry believes winning the war is critical to American security, even if starting the war was wrong.

It won't be easy to make Kristol's assertions stick. If the Democrats can convince enough voters that Kerry really wants to win in Iraq, Bush could lose.

That we are forced to choose between an incompetent, out-of-touch incumbent with the right vision, and a challenger who may have the wrong vision but makes a compelling case that the sky is falling, is deeply unsettling.

Richard Melmon
Menlo Park, CA

I appreciated William Kristol's editorial on John Kerry's behavior following President Bush's trip to the United Nations and Ayad Allawi's speech to Congress. I think the last observation in Kristol's article sums up the basic problem with Sen. Kerry as a potential president.

Kristol writes: "Is this really how Kerry wants to go down in history: willing to say anything to try to get elected, no matter what the damage to the people of Iraq, to American interests, and even to himself?"

Throughout this campaign, Kerry has shown he is not a man who believes in standing up for what is right. He believes, instead, in doing or saying whatever it takes to get himself elected.

If elected, Kerry will fail the American people because he won't have a coherent agenda to implement. He just wants the job, and he'll fill in the blanks later. Americans deserve a leader who has a plan.

Mark Savage
Sikeston, MO

Regarding William Kristol's editorial, "Disgraceful": Does no one recognize that Sen. Kerry is simply doing what he does best? I seem to recall that, upon returning from Vietnam, his words and deeds gave comfort and motivation to our enemies.

I also recall that, when pressed on the issue, Kerry claimed his youthfulness as an excuse. But he is doing the same thing again today on Iraq. What is Kerry's excuse now?

This recent example only shows that, in fact, Kerry *is* consistent: His wartime remarks consistently offer comfort to America's foes.

Tim Hirota
Santa Ana, CA

CBS Then, CBS Now

I enjoyed John Podhoretz's piece on CBS News and its 40-year history of irresponsible broadcasting on Vietnam ("Dan Rather's Day of Reckoning," Oct. 4). As a Vietnam veteran, I feel especially disappointed that the network has been so deceitful about that war.

I was terribly angry over CBS's reporting of the Tet Offensive in 1968. As a participant in that battle, I knew we had defeated the Viet Cong and had the NVA retreating. Gen. William Westmoreland, as Podhoretz notes, was also raked over the coals unjustifiably.

Now we see similarly irresponsible reporting on Iraq. There is a great deal of good news in Iraq that we are never told about. Thank goodness for the Internet, talk radio, and magazines such as The Weekly Standard.

Thomas H. Davies
Sequim, WA

John Podhoretz has written a great article about CBS's history of Vietnam-related misreporting. I would take issue only with his timeline. He is of course correct to cite *The Selling of the Pentagon* as CBS's first fictitious blast in the documentary field. But the network got their toes awfully wet even before that, when CBS News anchor Walter Cronkite declared the 1968 Tet Offensive a huge loss for the U.S. military.

That was the point, alas, when the mainstream media knew they were invincible.

Tom Wolenski
Peters Township, PA

Memogate

Regarding Matthew Continetti's "The Case of the Phony Memos" (Oct. 4): I am having a hard time reconciling what appears to be the current media defense of CBS. On the one hand, we are told that CBS has a 30-year history of journalistic excellence, and that Dan Rather, Mary Mapes, and others at the network are superb reporters. On the other hand, we are asked to believe these so-called geniuses are so stupid that they were "duped" into believing the false documents were real.

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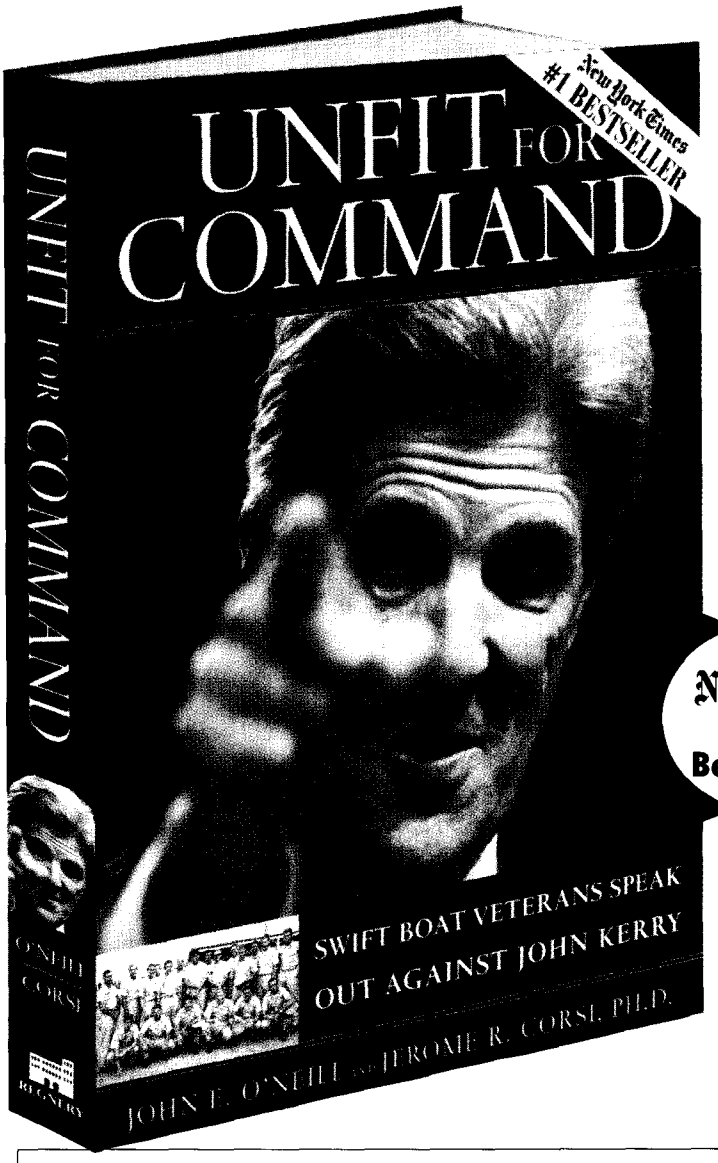

Unfit for Command—THE BOOK JOHN KERRY DOESN'T WANT YOU TO READ—UNCOVERS THE TRUTH ABOUT KERRY'S FRAUDULENT "MILITARY CAREER."

John Kerry is trying to run against President Bush based on his foreign policy expertise and actual military experience, but his fellow veterans tell a different story. Combat veteran John O'Neill, the naval officer who took over John Kerry's Swift Boat in Vietnam, and co-author Dr. Jerome Corsi (an expert on the anti–Vietnam War movement) unveil a John Kerry you don't know—the true John Kerry that his political image-makers are trying to hide.

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"Almost routinely every four years, many of my fellow Swiftees and I were asked to cooperate with the campaigns of Kerry's opponents—liberal and conservative, Republican and Democrat. Like me, almost all Swiftees refused to get involved. We wanted to leave the past behind. But that changed when it became apparent that Kerry might actually become commander in chief. The idea of John Kerry as "commander in chief" summoned many of us...to render one last service to the nation...informing an uninformed America...of John Kerry's total unfitness to lead our nation. We are our own small 'band of brothers' resolved to sound the alarm."

Want to know the *real* John Kerry? Read *Unfit for Command*—and prepare to be shocked.

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I don't buy it. Dan Rather may be a lot of things, but he is not stupid. I think CBS colluded with the Kerry campaign in an effort to bring down George W. Bush. I wonder why some journalists these days consider it their job to defeat Bush. Isn't that Kerry's job?

SHEILA BLANCHET
Guilford, CT

WINNING THE PEACE

MY ONE OBJECTION TO William Kristol's excellent "Victory or Surrender" (Sept. 27) is that it perpetuates the idea we are still at war in Iraq. The war is over and has been for some time. Presently, we are conducting security and assistance operations. This is not just a euphemism—it is a fundamental truth that is being lost.

Reasonable people may have been for or against the war to depose Saddam Hussein. But who can be against the Iraqi reconstruction except a penny-wise, pound-foolish paleocon or a latent fascist masquerading as "progressive"?

PAUL DEIGNAN
Lafayette, IN

STOPPING BY THE SOO

IN HIS ARTICLE "Swinging Right" (Sept. 27), Fred Barnes writes that George W. Bush was the "first" president to visit Michigan's Upper Peninsula "since William Howard Taft visited in 1911."

This is incorrect. In September 1992, President George H.W. Bush visited St. Ignace, in Michigan's Upper Peninsula, during his campaign for reelection.

FREDERICK T. CARR
Sault Ste. Marie, MI

DAKOTA ON THE DOLE

LIKE JOSEPH BOTTUM, I am from South Dakota ("Prairie Politics," Sept. 27), although I have lived in Colorado for the past 25 years. During that time, I have watched from afar with amazement as the supposed "conservatives" of South Dakota continually vote Democrats into national office.

The explanation for this has gradually become clear: They are conservatives except for one thing—they love that government check. If you lump together all the farm subsidies and various federal relief money that goes to South Dakota and call it what it is—welfare—then you understand. Most of South Dakota is on welfare of one kind or another.

No wonder they love Tom Daschle. Nothing beats a government check, and you *never* bite the hand that feeds you.

SCOTT E. BELL
Greenwood Village, CO

PRISON BREAK

I MUST RESPOND TO a small selection of the numerous inaccuracies and distortions contained in Eli Lehrer's review of my book, *American Gulag* ("Jail House Blues," June 14).

Lehrer asks, "If a reader takes Dow at his word that he doesn't want to draw an analogy with the 'purpose, scale, or often fatal brutality of the Soviet gulag,' then why does he include the word in his book's title?" Good question. And I offered three answers to it, all in the same paragraph from which Lehrer has quoted. Instead of contesting these answers, Lehrer pretends they aren't there.

Lehrer further asks why I "litter the book with quotations from Russian gulag writers like Joseph Brodsky." The book contains quotations from exactly two Russian gulag writers. The first is Solzhenitsyn and this comes in response to the question cited above. The second is Brodsky himself; I quote his brief description of the prison experience in general and its relationship to literature—the latter from his introduction to a PEN collection of prison writings from around the world, including the United States.

Concerning the case of a Somali being locked in a car in a hot parking lot by an immigration official, Lehrer writes that I "[insist] on finding a racial angle to the story." But I write that the immigration official who told me the story said it "made her think of Alabama in the 1950's" (she related the term "nigger roast"), and the incident opens a chapter that examines discrimination against immigrants from Africa.

"None of" the prisoners I spoke to "faced gratuitous beatings," according to Lehrer. This is false. Examples can be found on pages 76-77, 134-135, 142, 204, and 213 (a single incident), and on pages 328 and 348. Lehrer also neglects to mention that a detention guard I interviewed described a beating he administered, and a correctional officer described one he witnessed.

There's more. According to Lehrer, "Dow implies that it is an injustice the authorities will not release Lawniczek to Afghanistan so he can join up with a friend who is (no joke) connected to the Taliban." This is ridiculous. My description of the prisoner's wish to go to Afghanistan is plainly told to illustrate his apparent mental instability.

Lehrer also writes, "Nobody Dow talks to has a story of being denied medical care, although a few complain about inadequate psychological services . . . ." Presumably this formulation allows Lehrer to omit accounts which (to borrow his words) "would detract from his narrative." These include: a suicidal woman denied her antidepressant medication; a man denied psychiatric care by the immigration service, despite a correctional officer's repeated requests; a prisoner's complaint, verified by the immigration service itself, of a vermin-infested clinic; and an interview with two former nurses from a Houston detention center owned and operated by the Corrections Corporation of America who relate the practice of denying medical care as a cost-cutting measure.

This is just a sampling of Lehrer's technique. I invite interested readers to judge the book for themselves.

MARK DOW
Brooklyn, NY

• • •

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the weekly Standard

Never

Never have the American people elected as president a candidate with a record on national security issues resembling that of John Kerry. Consider some of the distinctive national security choices Kerry has made over the years.

* * *

April 22, 1971: The American people have never elected president someone who, while serving in the military, chose to testify (in uniform) against a war his country was then waging. Lt. Kerry asserted before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee that his country and his fellow service members were guilty in Vietnam of "crimes committed on a day-to-day basis with the full awareness of officers at all levels of command." Indeed, Kerry asserted that the American military was "more guilty than any other body of violations of [the] Geneva Conventions." Kerry forthrightly rejected the bipartisan doctrine that had guided American foreign policy for a generation, deriding "the mystical war against communism." Kerry today remains proud of his testimony.

Fall 1984: The American people have never elected president someone who, in his first successful bid for federal office, chose to make support for a unilateral nuclear freeze and for major cutbacks in America's defense programs the centerpiece of his campaign. The freeze and the cutbacks would have weakened U.S.-European ties, emboldened the Soviet Union, and strengthened the hand of hardliners in the Kremlin. Kerry has never said that the position he took at this turning point in the Cold War was mistaken.

January 12, 1991: The American people have never elected president a senator who voted against an authorization for the use of military force, in this case in pursuance of a United Nations-approved policy to eject Saddam Hussein from Kuwait. Senator Kerry complained in 1991 that we were engaged in "a rush to war." It turned out that Saddam had been only months away from acquiring nuclear capability. Kerry now cites the first Gulf War as a success for the purpose of contrasting it with the recent one—but he has never acknowledged that his judgment in opposing that war might have been in error.

October 17, 2003: The American people have never elected president someone who voted against an appropriation to support troops fighting in a war he had approved. Contrary to misleading press accounts, such as this one from the October 8 *USA Today*, this was not a "typical Senate situation in which party members vote yes on their own version of a bill and then vote no on the other party's version." Fellow Democrat Joe Biden had cosponsored with Kerry an alternative supplemental appropriation that would have paid for the war by repealing part of the Bush tax cut. But when the alternative was defeated, Biden and 38 other Democratic senators, unlike Kerry, voted for the final bill. Indeed, Biden made the case for the president's proposal on the Senate floor. In fact, in the vote on final passage of the $87 billion, Kerry was joined by only 11 other senators, less than a quarter of his fellow Democrats. And of the 77 senators who had voted to authorize the war, only four—Kerry, John Edwards, Tom Harkin, and Ernest Hollings—now voted to deny the troops the support they needed. Kerry had himself said just a month before, "I don't think any United States senator is going to abandon our troops and recklessly leave Iraq to whatever follows as a result of cutting and running. That's irresponsible." His vote against the $87 billion was irresponsible. Today he says he is proud of that vote.

Of the 77 senators who had voted to authorize the war in Iraq, only Kerry and three others voted to deny the troops the support they needed.

September 23, 2004: The American people have never elected president someone who gratuitously attacked a visiting leader, in this case Iraqi prime minister Ayad Allawi, after a speech to a joint session of Congress, when that leader's government was fighting terrorists on a day-to-day basis alongside American troops.

* * *

Will the American people choose as president someone with John Kerry's national security record? They never have before.

—*William Kristol*

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If at First You Don't Succeed . . .

Why Bush did better in the second debate.

BY FRED BARNES

PRESIDENT BUSH'S political strategists have avidly studied past campaigns. But they still repeated the most famous mistake of President Reagan's 1984 reelection campaign. They prepared Bush too relentlessly for his first nationally televised debate with John Kerry, holding practices and prep sessions for weeks before the actual encounter. The effect was to convince Bush he must avoid a gaffe at all cost. For most of the debate—the second half anyway—he was all but paralyzed. In Reagan's case, his wife Nancy insisted he'd been brutalized by his debate trainers, who told him he must be able to recite policy details. Something similar happened to Bush, who blamed both himself and his advisers. "He's not a detail guy," an aide said. "He's a big picture guy." But he said this *after* the debate.

Something quite different happened prior to the second debate. Bush boned up on issues in a more relaxed manner. There was only a single mock debate. Aides were easier on the president during practice sessions. The result was a vastly improved performance against Kerry. Bush looked comfortable. He put Kerry on the defensive several times. When Kerry gave a muddled answer on abortion, Bush responded, "I'm trying to decipher that." So was everyone else.

The second debate featured a town-hall format favorable to Kerry. Bill Weld, Kerry's opponent in the 1996 Massachusetts Senate race, told the Bush camp he'd been clobbered by Kerry in exactly that kind of debate. Bush held his own. By the third question (of 23), he began to make points effectively. If foreigners are unhappy with his administration, so be it, Bush said. "What I'm telling you is that sometimes in this world you make unpopular decisions because they're right." He listed a number of them, including opposition to Yasser Arafat, rejection of an International Criminal Court, and ousting Saddam Hussein. The implication was Kerry would cater to foreigners.

Getty / Chris Hondros

With the exception of the Reagan debate lesson, Bush strategists have learned a lot from earlier presidential campaigns, especially Bush's own in 2000. Remember, for example, the last week of that campaign. Bush continued traveling but he dropped his attacks on Al Gore and merely asked voters to elect him. He told one Republican leader he expected to get 300-plus electoral votes and win Michigan, Pennsylvania, and perhaps even New Jersey (he lost all three). Gore, of course, took the opposite tack, stepping up his criticism of Bush. And the race tightened to a dead heat.

Bush won't go soft again. He intends to zing Kerry as aggressively as ever in the week leading up to November 2. The third and final debate is scheduled on October 13, leaving nearly three uninterrupted weeks for Bush to hone and deliver an anti-Kerry message. It may seem obvious that staying on offense is important in the closing days of a campaign. But polls in 2000 led Bush to believe he had victory in hand during the last week. This time, he plans to ignore the polls, whatever they say, and continue on the attack.

Another lesson from 2000 involves fertile new Republican turf in the exurbs. Bush did extraordinarily well in the outer suburbs of metropolitan areas, and Republicans piled up huge majorities there in the midterm elections in 2002. So Karl Rove, the White House political chief, and other Bush campaign strategists decided to target these rapidly growing areas in voter-registration drives. Why bother registering voters elsewhere who might be Democrats? The vast majority of residents of the exurbs are conservative, traditional families—exactly the demographic most likely to vote Republican.

In Florida, the Bush campaign discovered a new type of immigrant seen as likely to lean Republican. In the 1980s, liberal Democrats from the Northeast poured into south Florida, making the state less conservative. In the 1990s, it was non-Cuban Hispanics who moved in and reinforced the liberal trend. But

Fred Barnes is executive editor of THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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since 2000, a large chunk of new immigrants are from the South, both retirees and young families who tend to be politically conservative. Rove was sent an academic study that reinforced this point, and he went to the trouble of consulting the scholar. Thus, new Floridians have been a special target for registration.

Rove's sidekick Matthew Dowd did much of the research into prior presidential reelection campaigns, looking at 1976, 1984, and 1992. He examined papers in the Reagan and Bush (the elder) libraries and those in the Baker Institute in Houston. James Baker was a top official in President Ford's 1976 campaign, which wasn't a reelection since Ford had been appointed vice president in 1973 and then succeeded President Nixon in 1974. Baker also ran the 1992 Bush reelection effort. Anyway, Dowd was looking for a campaign staff structure that would link top aides with White House officials and enable the group to make quick decisions. Dowd found models in the 1976 and 1984 campaigns, but not in the first President Bush's campaign in 1992.

Ford and Reagan, however, wouldn't recognize some of the tactics of the Bush campaign—for instance, Bush ads on the TV network operating in health clubs. Campaign manager Ken Mehlman boasts of an email list of 7.5 million Bush supporters. He says the campaign stays in touch with thousands of bloggers. He says it can tailor a message to a state or region. Since 1980, Mehlman says, he's learned a "one-size-fits-all" message isn't practical anymore.

There's a limit to the usefulness of the lessons learned and innovations implemented. Without a doubt, the 2004 Bush campaign is better than the 2000 operation. But the best campaign doesn't always win. One of the most impressive general election campaigns I've covered was Ford's in 1976, and he lost. Sometimes other factors—war, the economy, a candidate's weaknesses, even debates—overwhelm whatever a campaign can do. Still, a good debate performance always helps. ♦

Political Boss

Springsteen, REM, Bonnie Raitt, and other Democrats. BY DAVID SKINNER

Detroit

THERE'S A REASON no one has marketed what I call the rock'n'roll diet. You go to a concert, crash at the hotel, doze through breakfast, drive all day in a caffeine-fueled frenzy, grab a bag of black licorice at some gas station, and skip dinner to make it on time to another concert. The next day, your stomach already seems a little flatter.

But the rest of your body feels like a dirty pair of jeans that has been balled up in an overnight bag. Trust me, this is how it feels even if you skip the illegal drug part.

It was only because of my failure to properly manage my schedule that last weekend found me on the rock'n'roll diet. I was on the road to catch a pair of "Vote for Change" concerts—Bonnie Raitt and Jackson Browne in Cincinnati and REM and Bruce Springsteen in Detroit—organized by MoveOn. That notorious and well-funded 527 has enlisted these and other rock'n'roll acts to encourage voters in swing states to pull the lever for John Kerry. Such direct advocacy used to be illegal; now it's cool. Anyway, between concerts I kept getting lost and seemed to have no time to eat.

My only solid meal all weekend was at Arnold's (est. 1861) in Cincinnati, which is, appropriately, the kind of place where both NPR listeners and construction workers can feel at home. As the former marvel at its cozy, unmodernized décor, the latter can feast on its unpretentious kitchen fare. I try Swedish meatballs and the pasta special.

Then I join the crowd outside the Taft Theater, where most everyone walking through the doors accepts a Kerry-Edwards sticker for their shirt.

It's a boomer crowd. Everyone wears jeans and khakis, differentiated only by the messages on their T-shirts, and then only in the play on the word "Bush." They're clean-cut, though I notice a handful of mullets, suggesting at least a few Republicans.

The opening act, Keb' Mo', is good for a few laughs. He sings to those liberals who learned everything they needed to know in kindergarten. "Let's think about *our* behavior," he warbles, meaning: as opposed to our enemies' behavior. "And ask for a resolution," he continues, perhaps thinking of the U.N., before he returns to a chorus of "Why don't we talk to each other?"

Bonnie Raitt typifies the trend that's made it politically correct to celebrate the libidinal urges of middle-aged women. Thanks to the Lifetime Channel, Mrs. Robinson is now Mrs. Main Street. But Raitt has the chops to pull it off (thanks to the rock'n'roll diet, my guess is). From my seat in the fifth row, I would swear she has the body of a college girl.

She even talks like a college girl, one with a case of pottymouth. "I'm only giving it up for guys on the Vote for Change Tour," she says after a little riff on working with men she's been involved with romantically. Or not so romantically. She says that on her first national tour in 1974, with Jackson Browne, "there were 13 guys on the bus . . ."—she holds for a full beat—"and me."

During intermission, looking for swing voters, I avoid anyone wearing stylish eyewear or handmade garments. I fall into conversation with Jim, who's 24 and lives in Cincinnati. "Oil is the only reason we're in Iraq," Jim tells me. You don't think Saddam

David Skinner is an assistant managing editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

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Hussein was dangerous, I ask? Of course he was dangerous, says Jim. "We knows he's got the weapons because we sold them to him." Weapons of mass destruction, I ask, seeking to clarify. "Yeah."

"I'd rather vote for Joe Walsh," jokes his buddy, Bill, more of the swinging type, also in his 20s, who complains that he doesn't really know who to believe in this election. He came tonight for the music, he says, a sentiment I will hear several times this weekend.

Jackson Browne, cigarette thin with straight hair and vacant eyes, is a low-intensity performer, cool in the Marshall McLuhan sense. For their part, the audience laps up his quiet songs and self-condemning lyrics.

Browne comments on the "change" in presidents he'd like to see. "This is about *changing* from a hedonist to a hedonist with a conscience."

The audience loves it, but they save their biggest hurrahs for Browne's riposte to a fan who calls out the title of an old favorite.

"Yeah," quips the almost motionless singer, "I could play 'Running on Empty' . . . for George Bush." Howls, applause, even some whoops.

As I exit, the guy on the corner selling anti-Bush stickers is doing the kind of business usually seen in the milk aisle before a hurricane.

Springsteen in Detroit

Reuters / Landov / Rebecca Cook

In Detroit, where I arrive lean and grubby, the opening act, Bright Eyes, is playing to many empty seats. Their music is sad—no, devastated. Singer Conor Oberst sounds like he thinks breathing is not worth the effort. The microphone falls to the stage at one point, and Oberst, all 90 or so pounds of him, goes down too, not missing a note as he continues to howl with his face on the floor.

Oberst tells the good people of Michigan, "I'm scared of what the world will look like after four more years of Bush." Being as young as he is, he's worried "they'll bring back the draft." And if you're female, he thinks you should also be afraid, because eventually Bush is going to do away with your right to an abortion.

Michael Stipe of REM is probably not on the rock'n'roll diet. The man is simply vanishing into thin air. If there's an Ethiopian version of the rock'n'roll diet, maybe he's on that, but there's no way he's even *touched* his licorice.

What becomes apparent as REM, possibly the best American rock band of the late '80s, plays one classic hit after another is that few people are here to see REM. Only when Bruce Springsteen comes on stage to sing a verse of "Man on the Moon" does any portion of the audience rise to its feet.

During intermission, I look for swing voters. At first, Megan Bond of Spring Green, Wisconsin, sounds a lot like one. She's voting for Kerry, she tells me, but not with enthusiasm. Rudy Giuliani was recently in Spring Green, she mentions, and she likes him.

I ask a couple more questions, and she comes clean. "Now I have to tell you I was lying when I told you I was going to vote for Kerry."

A diehard Bruce fan, she didn't want to be overheard saying she was voting for the president. And, boy, she doesn't like Kerry. When the senator recently visited a school in Spring Green, he "only allowed 50 children to attend." Bond is still steamed about the kids who didn't get to see him. "If you want to win friends and influence people," she says, "you make sure you *see* those people."

Springsteen finally takes the stage, and empty seats fill up. Few are actually in use, though, as the audience finally comes to life during the Boss's solo guitar rendition of the "Star-Spangled Banner," which is not quite as ridiculous as the Jimi Hendrix version.

Springsteen and the full E Street Band then launch into a set of nine

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songs, mostly classics, without pause. They play with heart and energy and precision. Even the two tracks off Bruce's wimpy post-9/11 album *The Rising* have been souped up for the roadshow and sound good. By the third song (they'll play about 20 in all) Springsteen's shirt is soaked. Later on, he even does a running knee-slide.

John Fogerty then materializes on stage to play a few songs with Springsteen, including "Fortunate Son." Michael Stipe too returns to the stage, for a duet rendition with Springsteen of "Because the Night (belongs to lovers)," strictly speaking, one of the less heterosexual moments of the evening.

After about 16 songs, the Boss wants to talk politics. "We're here with a purpose. We're on a mission." He adopts the hammy manner of a revival-tent preacher. "Is there anybody in the house that needs to be saved from the burdens of Republicanism?" Before I can raise my hand or point out that nice woman from Wisconsin, I notice there's already a Republican on stage, a comic figure in pinstripes, bow tie, and nerd glasses. Bruce lays his hand on the unfortunate soul, who staggers backwards as the Holy Spirit of the Democratic party enters him. Then the guy holds up a sign saying "Bush Must Go."

After another song, Springsteen delivers a "public service announcement" in which he says "we remain the America of great promise," but now is the time to fulfill that promise. In short, as Springsteen says later, "Vote for John Kerry."

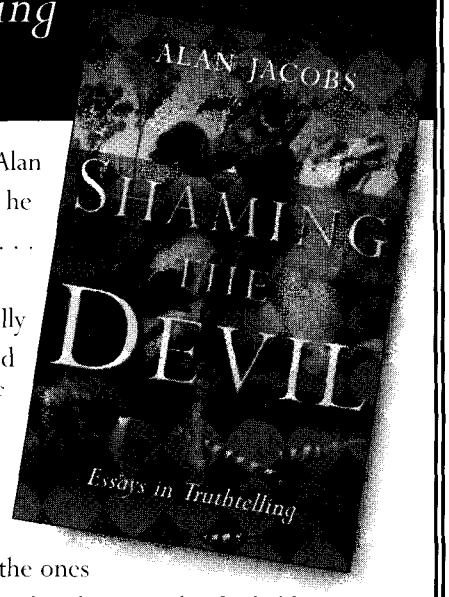
Some of the Boss's shtick is eloquent. "America's not always right," Springsteen says, "but America's always true." For his closer, Springsteen returns to the theme of America's promise: "The country that's in our hearts is out there waiting."

Seeing me take notes, the guy in the row behind me asks if he can photograph the page where I wrote down Springsteen's speech. I feel myself carried along by the tide of good feeling. Or maybe it's my low blood sugar. All I've consumed since my licorice lunch is a Rice Krispy treat I grabbed at the hotel.

But then Michael Stipe begins a song called "People have the Power." The Dixie Chicks appear on stage to sing along. Everyone's there, all the regular folk who happen to be rock stars, and Michael Stipe removes his jacket to reveal a Vote for Change T-shirt with John Kerry's name on the logo. Wait a minute, I think, I'm not a people-power person, and I don't like John Kerry. The spell is broken.

If Bruce Springsteen could perform for every American who hasn't made up his mind, this could be a significantly different race. Thank God he's only preaching to the choir—and to fans of his music who don't really care what he says between songs. ♦

SHAMING THE DEVIL
Essays in Truthtelling
ALAN JACOBS



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Taking Dictation from the ACLU

A case study in anti-Patriot Act propaganda.

BY HEATHER MAC DONALD

IMAGINE THE *New York Times* writing a damning article about the Clinton administration's tax policies cribbed exclusively from a Heritage Foundation press release. Can't do it, can you?

How about the Gray Lady recycling ACLU misinformation about the Patriot Act without any additional research? This time, no need to imagine anything: Both the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* did exactly that recently and thereby published a tissue of fabrication. Both papers issued tight-lipped corrections the next day, but the damage had been done: The mainstream media's overpowering lust for anti-Patriot Act propaganda had been exposed as neatly as if a trap had been laid by the Ashcroft Justice Department.

The unmasking began on September 28, when a federal judge overturned a 1986 law allowing the FBI to seek customer records from phone and Internet companies in terrorism investigations. Section 2709 of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act allows the FBI to issue a "national security letter" (a type of subpoena) to a communications carrier demanding the name, address, length of service, and billing records of a customer when such information is relevant to stopping terrorism. The FBI may not see the content of the customer's communications. But simple billing records might establish, say, that a particular Moroccan engineering student about whom the Bureau had received classified information had been calling an al Qaeda handler in Pakistan.

In April, the ACLU sued to invalidate the national security letter (NSL) provision of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act on primarily two grounds: first, that section 2709 failed to spell out any process whereby a phone or Internet company could try to quash an NSL in court, and, second, that it prohibited the recipient of an NSL from disclosing that he had received such a request from the FBI. These features of the law violate the First and Fourth Amendments of the Constitution, according to the ACLU.

Surprisingly, the government agreed with at least one of the ACLU's assumptions. The recipient of a national security letter, no less than the target of any other subpoena, the government acknowledged, *should* be able to contest the document request in court—*and, in fact, he can*. Such a right of challenge is implicit in section 2709, according to Justice Department attorneys; thus, the absence of an explicit procedure for court review was no reason to throw out the law.

On the question of whether the FBI could prohibit an NSL recipient from disclosing the request, the Justice attorneys by contrast disagreed sharply with the ACLU. Secrecy is absolutely essential to counterterrorism work, maintained the government; revealing that particular individuals are under surveillance could fatally jeopardize an investigation and put informants' lives at risk. But even here, the government conceded that an NSL recipient could at some point go to court to argue that the disclosure ban was no longer necessary.

Federal judge Victor Marrero of the Southern District of New York sided with the ACLU and declared section 2709 of the Electronic Communications Privacy Act unconstitutional. He declined to read an implied right of challenge into the provision—thus finding that it impermissibly forbade court review, and he dismissed the presumptive need for absolute secrecy in terrorism cases.

Marrero's decision—*Doe* v. *Ashcroft*—was a victory for the ACLU, to be sure, but what it wasn't was a repudiation of the Patriot Act. The judge mentioned the Patriot Act maybe three times in a 120-page decision, merely to note that it had modified the 1986 law in a way that had nothing to do with the court challenge. (Specifically, the Patriot Act continued a process begun in 1993 of broadening the application of NSLs to communications customers who were not foreign agents. This Patriot Act amendment was not at issue in the ACLU case; only the absence of a judicial review provision in the original 1986 law and the original disclosure ban were under litigation.)

But the ACLU spun *Doe* v. *Ashcroft* as a major blow to the Patriot Act and to the Bush administration's war on terror. Its September 29 press release crowed: "Federal Court Strikes Down Patriot Act Surveillance Power as Unconstitutional." The release quoted executive director Anthony Romero: "'This is a landmark victory against the Ashcroft Justice Department's misguided attempt to intrude into the lives of innocent Americans.'" Another attorney's blurb declared: "'As this decision suggests, certain provisions of the Patriot Act should never have been enacted in the first place.'" Associate legal director Ann Beeson melodramatically opined: "'It is an enormous relief to be able to tell the world just how dangerous and extreme this Patriot Act power is.'"

This was purest deception. *Doe* v. *Ashcroft* did not "suggest [that] certain provisions of the Patriot Act should never have been enacted in the first place," because it did not adjudi-

Heather Mac Donald is a contributing editor to the Manhattan Institute's City Journal *and author of* Are Cops Racist?

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cate the Patriot Act. In fact, the decision was a rebuke to Democratic senator Patrick Leahy, who had introduced section 2709 in 1986, calling it a "clear procedure for access to telephone toll records in counterintelligence investigations." But the ACLU's press release was utterly silent about the existence of the 1986 Electronic Communications Privacy Act or section 2709's author.

And therefore, so too were the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post* the next day. Both simply repackaged the ACLU spin without any further fact-checking—and, apparently, without reading Marrero's decision. Their headlines parroted the press release: "Judge Strikes Down Section of Patriot Act Allowing Secret Subpoenas of Internet Data" (*New York Times*); "Key Part of Patriot Act Ruled Unconstitutional" (*Washington Post*). The *New York Times* made its ACLU-induced misreading of the decision as unambiguous as possible: The case concerned a "kind of subpoena created under the [Patriot] act, known as a national security letter," it explained.

The newspapers' only emendation of the ACLU's gloss was to strengthen the alleged anti-Patriot Act significance of the decision. The *New York Times* called the invalidated section of the electronic communications law an "*important* surveillance provision" of the Patriot Act; the *Washington Post* dubbed the discredited section a "*key* component of the USA Patriot Act" (emphasis added). This sudden significance of the NSL provision was surprising, because in all the avalanche of anti-Patriot Act propaganda that the papers had previously published in the three years before the ACLU lawsuit, the *New York Times* had never mentioned the national security letter amendment in the Patriot Act, and the *Washington Post* had done so in merest passing only six times, without ever deeming it "key."

Now, however, national security letters had become the very linchpin of the Bush administration's war on terror. The *Times* cited the ACLU's Anthony Romero to evaluate the ruling: "'a stunning victory against John Ashcroft's Justice Department.'" The *Post* quoted the ACLU's Ann Beeson: "'a wholesale refutation of the administration's use of excessive secrecy and unbridled power under the Patriot Act.'"

No other newspaper fell for the ACLU snow job as slavishly as the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*. Every other paper managed to find out—though to varying degrees of accuracy—that national security letters did not originate with the Patriot Act. The *Boston Globe*, *USA Today*, and the *Los Angeles Times* all reported that a 1986 law had authorized NSLs, but they still argued that *Doe* v. *Ashcroft* was a major setback to the Patriot Act and the Bush administration.

Only the *New York Times* and the *Washington Post*, therefore, were forced to issue corrections the next day. The *Washington Post*'s retraction was particularly grudging, conceding icily that "while the Patriot Act loosened restrictions on the use of the letters, most of U.S. District Judge Victor Marrero's ruling focuses on earlier statutes governing the letters." The *Post* couldn't bring itself actually to explain the significance of those "earlier statutes."

The ACLU had suddenly lost its advantage, and it went berserk. In a hilarious effort to turn the tables, it accused the *Justice Department* of trying to spin the decision. "ACLU Blasts Justice Department's Attempts to Manipulate Truth About Patriot Act Ruling," screamed the headline of its next press release, issued the same day as the *Times*'s and *Post*'s corrections. "In what appears to be a concerted campaign to mislead the American public," the release continued, "the Department of Justice and some of its Republican allies in Congress are attempting to minimize the impact of a landmark ruling this week against so-called National Security Letters." Proof of this skullduggery? An email from a Senate Republican Policy Committee analyst to Senate leaders pointing out the fact that *Doe* v. *Ashcroft* had struck down the 1986 law creating NSLs (mentioned here for the first time in ACLU publicity materials), and thus should not be regarded as a rebuke to the Patriot Act.

The ACLU declared itself *shocked* by such allegedly deceptive practices. Ann Beeson called the Senate email message "desperate." What was in fact desperate was the ACLU's agonized response to this unaccustomed collision with the truth: "There is no question that the court struck down a provision of the law that was dramatically expanded by the Patriot Act," it whined, in a dramatic deflation of its original claims.

That the ACLU engages in nonstop deception about the war on terror is not news. But it is not every day that the eagerness of the elite media for such deception is so clearly exposed. The mainstream press already knows that the Patriot Act is a dangerous assault on civil liberties, so when the ACLU confirms this knowledge, why bother to check the facts? ♦

THE WASHINGTON POST

appeals court
has B. Griffith may be
Oct. 7.

peared "very close-
her Griffith met

Key Part of Patriot Act Ruled Unconstitutional

Internet Providers' Data at Issue

By DAN EGGEN
Washington Post Staff Writer

A federal judge in New York ruled yesterday that a key component of the USA Patriot Act is unconstitutional because it allows the FBI to demand information from Internet service providers without judicial oversight or public review.

The ruling is one of several judicial blows to the Bush administration's anti-terrorism policies in re-

batants" may challenge their confinement through the U.S. courts. Two rulings by federal courts in California have also struck down portions of statutes making it a crime to provide "material support" to terrorists.

The ultimate impact of Marrero's order is unclear. In addition to having time to pursue an appeal, the government will view the ruling as applying only to New York's Southern

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Mythmaking in Berlin

Germany has a lot of history to forget.

BY JEREMY RABKIN

Berlin

THE ASPEN INSTITUTE of Berlin celebrated its thirtieth anniversary with a conference in the German capital at the end of September. As one of the speakers, I found that a German audience will listen politely to criticism of the thinking behind the International Criminal Court.

What Germans find hard to accept is that the United States will continue to reject this project—and that, on this issue at least, Germany has parted company with the perspective and priorities of its longtime ally. Two officials from the Foreign Ministry took turns trying to explain to me that it was all a misunderstanding because the Court was a project for universal values, and America could not be opposed to universal values.

It's hard for Germans to pick a side. The conference happened to coincide with the eve of the anniversary of the reunification treaty of 1990, celebrated as the Day of German Unity. On the western side of the Brandenburg Gate, the government organized a celebration. Crowds listened politely to American pop bands, alternating with recordings of music from Latin America. On the other side of the gate, in the former East Berlin, the occasion was marked by a protest march organized by the Party of Democratic Socialism, successor to the East German Communist Party. It was better attended than the "unity" celebrations in the former West Berlin. The protesters denounced plans to cut unemployment benefits and carried signs insisting that it was wrong to pose a choice between justice and economic progress. Some protesters denounced "globalization"—in the name of "humanity."

Not many people stopped to look at the Memorial to the Murdered Jews of Europe, only two blocks from the Gate. There isn't much to look at, even though construction on this project is nearing completion. It consists of concrete boxes, many hundreds of them, spread over a field that is two or three square blocks. Perhaps the architects imagined the effect would be suggestive of a cemetery. In fact, the place looks like nothing so much as a vast loading dock, filled with shipping crates. People who, in life, had contributed so much to the commercial energy and intellectual vitality of their nations are memorialized here as inert freight. There is nothing to indicate who murdered them or why. It is a memorial that conveys a general mood of regret, while managing to avoid evoking any particular memory of any particular history. Germans have learned to distrust historical memory, which is always so particular.

At the Deutsches Historisches Museum, a visitor could learn that all nations have evaded their own past.

At the Deutsches Historisches Museum, a visitor could learn that all nations have evaded their own past. The "Myths of Nations" exhibit opened at the start of the festival of German Unity, but was only incidentally about German history. Selections from films, books, and posters of the postwar era called attention to the self-serving ways in which governments around Europe had encouraged or insisted upon a self-serving view of the past.

In West Germany, as the exhibit documents, the story was that SS units had committed horrible crimes but the German army as a whole had had nothing to do with such atrocities. In Eastern Europe, the Red Army was always depicted as a "liberator," even in countries which had chosen to ally with Germany at the beginning of the war. In the West, nations obscured the scale of collaboration with German occupation and chose to remember themselves united in wartime resistance. France told itself it was one of the victors, and Britain told itself it was still a great power.

And Americans told themselves they had "brought democracy and freedom to the world" in a "master narrative" that was "renewed again and again in the context of the Vietnam war in the 1960s and after September 11, 2001." The exhibit is coy about whether the American "master narrative" should be regarded as equivalent to the delusions or the propaganda claims of other nations. But it does assert that the "myths of the postwar period appeared first in the ranks of the victorious Allied powers." Everybody tells stories, so here, too, Germany is now at one with all nations.

A few blocks beyond the history museum are various art museums on the so-called Museum Island. One of the bridges to the island is decorated with an artistic representation: an image of Europe superimposed on satellite images of Los Angeles and Beijing "symbolizing," as an official plaque explains, "opposing social con-

Jeremy Rabkin is the author of The Case for Sovereignty: Why the World Should Welcome American Independence *(AEI).*

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cepts out of which an integrated European vision emerges."

German newspapers carried word of the government's success in arranging for the political mediation of claims that German citizens had threatened to bring to the European Court of Human Rights, regarding property confiscated by Poles at the end of the war. The claims might well have been legally valid or judged as such by the European Court. But they would have enraged the Poles and jeopardized European harmony. So the German government had worked hard to have them removed from the courts.

But the International Criminal Court is different, at least as Germans see it. It will focus on the worst abuses, those for which the international community must demand strict justice. Or at least those abuses that, by international consensus, must never be tolerated. One such provision, inserted at the insistence of Arab delegates at the drafting conference for the ICC Statute, makes it a "war crime" for an "occupying power" to "transfer, directly or indirectly, . . . parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."

German officials insist that they do not support prosecution of Israeli officials for allowing Jews to live in the old city of Jerusalem and other places from which Jews were ethnically cleansed in 1948. But Germany, the most insistent champion of the ICC, judged this provision worth accepting, in order to achieve the wider aim of international consensus.

Over at the Alte Nationalgalerie, the main exhibit was of clouds—many, many, many clouds. The museum devoted an entire floor to artistic representations of clouds, mostly by nineteenth-century German artists who had, as the exhibit documents, struggled to achieve a correct scientific depiction of clouds. Almost none of these pictures had room for recognizable human beings. Still, the cloudscapes apparently speak to German sensibilities. The clouds are clean and light and float freely above messy disputes on the ground. ♦

The Battle for New Jersey

Why Bush is now competitive.

BY VICTORINO MATUS

YOU MIGHT THINK with more electoral votes than Wisconsin, Iowa, or Missouri, and with local polls showing the president narrowly trailing his Democratic opponent, that New Jersey would by now have played host to both George W. Bush and John Kerry. In fact, neither man has stumped there, or even dropped into one of the state's ubiquitous diners.

It would also seem a ripe opportunity for Bush to put Kerry on the defensive in a state that has been a Democratic stronghold. Four years ago, New Jersey chose Al Gore over Bush by a 16-point margin (56 percent to 40 percent). In 1996, the state went for Bill Clinton by 18 percentage points. In early August, right after the Democratic convention, the *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers poll showed Kerry leading Bush by 20 points. According to the latest Quinnipiac poll, Kerry now leads Bush by a mere 3 points (49 percent to 46 percent).

What explains the closing gap? Some think the reason must be 9/11. More than 700 New Jerseyans died at the World Trade Center that day. That's more loss of life than in any other state except New York. Middletown Township, with fewer than 70,000 residents, lost almost 50 people in the towers. The following month saw the anthrax scare—with four contaminated letters bearing Trenton postmarks. In August it was reported that one of the targets for possible terrorist attack was the Prudential Financial Center in Newark. Meanwhile, an estimated four million cargo containers are entering Port Elizabeth each year, fueling fears of smuggled nuclear weapons.

Victorino Matus is an assistant managing editor at THE WEEKLY STANDARD.

Patrick Murray, acting director of the *Star-Ledger*/Eagleton-Rutgers poll, says that although most New Jerseyans agree with Kerry on social issues, "it is terrorism that is really worrying us because we know what the cost of terrorism is." He points out after the Democratic convention, Kerry had a 4-point advantage over Bush on the question of who would better prosecute the war on terror. "That swung absolutely the opposite way after the Republican convention, and it was the only number that swung that large."

Both campaigns know well the importance of homeland security. Two weeks ago, John Edwards led a rally in Newark alongside 9/11 widow Kristen Breitweiser. "Using one of the greatest tragedies in American history, something many people in this room understand personally, is wrong," said Edwards. (Unless, that is, you're stumping with a 9/11 widow.) Four days later, former mayor Rudy Giuliani rallied on behalf of the president in Bergen County.

The other explanation for the tight race may be the scandals that have tainted the state's Democrats. In 2002, Democratic governor James McGreevey announced he had hired "a security adviser from the Israeli Defense forces." Except this adviser had no experience in security. In fact, he is an Israeli publicist and poet named Golan Cipel.

Cipel now claims to have been sexually harassed by McGreevey and has threatened a lawsuit. The governor insists the affair was consensual but

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nevertheless announced in August his intention to resign later this fall (in a speech that will be remembered for the line, "I am a gay American").

The McGreevey episode, though, was only the latest in a series of scandals to rock the state. There was, for instance, former senator Robert Torricelli, who, after being accused of taking extravagant bribes and under intense scrutiny, dropped out of his own race a month before the 2002 election. Democrats then pinch-hit with retired senator Frank Lautenberg who went on to win. McGreevey's state police superintendent quit after rumors leaked of his alleged ties to organized crime. One of the governor's strongest backers, real-estate magnate Charles Kushner—whom McGreevey wanted to head the Port Authority board—faces up to two years in prison for various corruption charges and witness-tampering. (Trying to blackmail those testifying against him, Kushner hired prostitutes to try to seduce the witnesses on videotape. This actually worked with one of the men—Kushner's brother-in-law.)

Meanwhile, the governor's resignation on November 15 makes way for Richard Codey, president of the state senate, to take over as the unelected acting governor. Under New Jersey law, Codey gets to keep both jobs and both salaries. "Talk about your checks and balances," says David Rebovich, a political science professor at Rider University. "He's the Senate president. What is he going to say to his caucus? 'I think we're going to have to amend this because I have a feeling the governor is not going to like it?'"

Fred Siegel, a professor at the Cooper Union, thinks that in fact New Jersey voters may indeed be thinking about checks and balances. "There is this steady dripping effect," he says. "It hasn't stopped since Torricelli. You add this question of unchecked power, and the idea of a Republican in the White House doesn't seem so bad as a counterpoint."

Are Democrats worried? "I am *always* worried," says Rep. Bill Pascrell, the Kerry-Edwards co-chair. Pascrell is not one to take anything for granted and admits that some combination of 9/11 and the McGreevey scandal has turned New Jersey into a battleground. Because the candidates are focusing elsewhere, Pascrell says "we've got to raise all the money on our own and get out the vote." Still, he insists, "We are exactly where we should be." He predicts Kerry will win by 8 to 12 points.

Republican Douglas Forrester, the man who lost to Frank Lautenberg in 2002 but is contemplating a gubernatorial run next year, thinks the race will be much closer. "There is a great sense of awareness of the magnitude of what terrorists can do," he says, which will help Bush. Forrester has also seen polls "in which corruption ranks as the second concern among the electorate, which is extraordinary. . . . The Democratic party is suffering from the fallout . . . and it's translating not just into state politics but also politics at the federal level."

Like Pascrell, Forrester acknowledges his state party will mostly go it alone. "One of the difficulties New Jersey faces is that the media markets serving us are in New York and Philadelphia, so unlike other states, we aren't dealing exclusively with a decision to allocate just to one place." According to David Rebovich, ad buys on the New York network affiliates can cost roughly $4 million per week.

Cheaper than advertising, a campaign appearance by a surrogate can also be effective. Edwards's Newark rally came on the heels of a surprise visit by Laura Bush. She is scheduled to return next week. Vice President Cheney is also expected to stop in. New Jersey Republicans are hoping these visits will turn the tide.

Bush won't need New Jersey's coveted 15 electoral votes in order to win reelection. It may be enough just for the president to keep the race close, forcing the Democrats to divert resources and time from other battleground states. Of course if Bush were actually to win in New Jersey, he would probably be looking at a victory similar to the one the last time a Republican won that state—in 1988, when his father won a landslide over Michael Dukakis, that other liberal from Massachusetts. ♦

Axis of Weakness

Europe appeases the mullahs.

BY JEFFREY GEDMIN

Berlin

IN EARLY SEPTEMBER at an annual meeting here of Germany's ambassadors, Foreign Minister Joschka Fischer told his top diplomats that the E.U. would "not accept" nuclear weapons in the hands of the mullahs. He had discussed the matter with the foreign ministers of France and Britain and "nothing would change" in this position. Fischer warned against a nuclear arms race in the Middle East (it would be a "nightmare," he said) and appealed three times to the Iranian leadership not to miscalculate.

That sounds serious. But then remember that high-noon rhetoric in Euroland means something different than it does in Texas. I once watched a dubbed western in Germany. In the original the sheriff says to the outlaw, "If yer not outta town by sundown, I'm gonna come gunnin' for you." In the German version the villain gets stern mutterings about the need to de-register at the *Einwohneranmeldeamt*—literally, the inhabitant registration office, the local authority where you fill out forms anytime you move from one place of residence to

Jeffrey Gedmin is director of the Aspen Institute Berlin.

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another. Now that'll make you shake in your boots.

In truth, Germany's Iran policy has been bankrupt from nearly day one. Bonn started the project in 1992 under the banner of "Critical Dialogue." While Germany and its European partners tried aid, trade, credits, and diplomatic indulgences, the regime in Tehran continued to support terrorism, repress the Iranian people, and clandestinely pursue nuclear weapons. In 1999 the E.U. changed the name of the policy to "Constructive Dialogue." A German friend of mine once explained to me, with some embarrassment, how the policy works. Europe is nice to the mullahs, and when this fails, well, Europe tries to be a little nicer.

It is not hard to imagine how hilarious all this must look from Tehran's perspective. While today Fischer talks tough, senior officials in Berlin are making no secret of the fact that they believe multilateral sanctions will never work and a military option to check Iran's nuclear ambitions is out of the question. Germany has been allergic even to the idea of stepped-up political pressure. There is some irony to all this, of course. On the one hand, Berlin has been campaigning hard for a permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council. Germany loves the U.N. On the other hand, the Germans have also campaigned to keep the issue of Iran's nuclear program out of the Security Council.

A recent headline in a Berlin daily called for the West to offer Tehran "a fair price" to give up its nuclear ambition. A paper recently published by an important government-funded think tank in Berlin offers concrete proposals: "normalization of American-Iranian relations, U.S. abandonment of stigmatizing Iran as a 'rogue state' [and] the lifting of economic sanctions." It seems the Germans have run out of carrots and it's time for the Americans to do their part. The author argues for greater European support of "moderate forces," referring not to Iran, but rather to those in the United States who support more "engagement" with the mullahs.

Things are not much better in Britain. Prime Minister Tony Blair may have more serious inclinations, but he is using Iran to show his Europeanness and will be loath to break E.U. ranks again as he did over Iraq. His foreign minister, Jack Straw, is a dedicated advocate of the E.U. approach. Straw raced to Tehran shortly after 9/11 to appeal to common values in the struggle against terrorism. Even among Tories, there is consensus about the imperative of "engagement." Conservative politician Chris Patten says the failure of E.U. policy on Iran has been one of the biggest disappointments in his tenure as E.U. commissioner. Strangely, Patten also steadfastly rejects a harder line and insists that there is no alternative to détente.

For their part, the French, of course, still see Iran as part of the greater game: building the E.U. as a geostrategic counterweight to the United States. President Jacques Chirac and German chancellor Gerhard Schröder recently visited Madrid together. They must feel encouraged by developments there. The new Spanish defense minister, José Bono, says his country is no longer "kneeling" before Washington and that it is high time for Madrid to "show its sovereignty." What better chance than to use Iran as a test case for an independent E.U. foreign policy?

You can get to the bottom line pretty quickly. The mullahs want the bomb. The E.U. will help them get it. Over the last 22 months—and six board meetings of the International Atomic Energy Agency—the terrible unilateralists of the Bush administration have pushed in vain for the E.U. to support the United States in getting the matter referred to the Security Council. It is simply not the time "to wield that weapon," writes the left-wing British newspaper the *Guardian*. A mighty weapon it is! When the issue finally gets to the U.N., we all know the script. Saddam Hussein got 17 resolutions and 12 years, at the end of which America received angry calls from Berlin and Paris for still more time to coax the Iraqi dictator to behave.

It is hard to see how we avoid another transatlantic meltdown. The chattering classes across Europe are already busy developing the rationale for appeasement. Britain's *Financial Times* says "Iran has legitimate security concerns," being "surrounded by nuclear-armed powers including Israel and nervous of U.S. forces in Iraq, Afghanistan, central Asia and the Gulf." In the August 26, 2004, issue of the British magazine *Prospect*, one columnist poses the question: "Rather than thinking about how to keep [the mullahs] in their place, why not take their interests seriously?"

Adds Steven Everts of the London-based Centre for European Reform in the *Financial Times*: "It's very, very difficult to dissuade a country from going down the path of nuclear weapons if it's convinced that its strategic approach requires them." This E.U.-speak roughly translates as: "You varmints better high tail it outta here, unless of course you prefer not to because you'd rather stick around and mess with the townfolk, in which case all of us are gonna be pretty darn mad." ♦

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The Two Faces of Liberalism

Bush's foreign policy versus Kerry's.

BY ADAM WOLFSON

MORE THAN A DECADE after the end of the Cold War, foreign affairs are once again front and center of American politics, and for the first time in perhaps five elections, since the face-off between Ronald Reagan and Jimmy Carter in 1980, Americans must choose between two distinct approaches to U.S. foreign policy. Choosing well requires understanding the large as well as the subtle differences between the approaches of George W. Bush and John F. Kerry.

Which man is in the Oval Office could not be more consequential. Yet, it is often overlooked that their views on foreign policy spring from a common source—a liberal idealism rooted in liberal hopefulness. It is no accident that we tend to think of liberals as starry-eyed dreamers and conservatives as hard-headed realists. Hope is integral to liberalism, not conservatism.

But in his foreign policy, Bush, as much as Kerry, is guided by hope. The word "hope" appears in most of Bush's speeches, and hope is central to his message. Certainly, the president puts his hopes in very different things than Kerry, but his political strength, his appeal to the American electorate, is largely based on his having stolen a card from the liberal deck.

Historically, liberal idealism in foreign affairs held up two central values, internationalism and democracy. The basic idea can be traced back to Enlightenment thinkers such as Montesquieu and Kant. A lasting peace could be approached in a world of commercial republics united together in something like a League of Nations or a United Nations. That at least was the argument.

Up until the dislocations of Vietnam and Watergate and the presidency of Jimmy Carter, liberals reliably acclaimed both principles. But in the course of Carter's presidency, liberals lost their self-confidence and sacrificed their belief in democracy to their internationalist faith. They became relativists. Sure, democracy was fine for us Americans, they seemed to say, but who were we to claim it was right for others? In their view, to champion democracy abroad was at once hypocritical and chauvinistic. Indeed, their relativism only reinforced their internationalism. The less faith they put in the principles of democracy, the more liable they were to take their guidance instead from international opinion (as reflected, say, in votes at the U.N.). The tragedy is that in an undemocratic, illiberal world, this sometimes meant acquiescing to malevolent forces.

But then a strange thing happened. In the course of the 1980s, the old, neglected liberal faith in democracy took flight and migrated to the Republican party. During Ronald Reagan's presidency, conservatives began to make the democratic faith their own. A few embraced it as a universal cause and became "neo-Wilsonians." Others saw democracy not in idealistic terms, but more pragmatically (and conservatively) as a means of advancing America's national interest. With this correction of the traditional liberal ideal, these conservatives were seeking to transcend the modern realism-idealism dichotomy.

Reagan, a former Democrat, embodied this new turn in conservative thought. His embrace of the Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) as a way of making nuclear weapons "impotent and obsolete," to use his words, exemplified his idiosyncratic hopefulness. The proposal befuddled his liberal opponents, who had always preened themselves as the anti-nuclear party, but it also worried his conservative supporters, who had prided themselves on their hard-headedness.

They should not have worried: We now know the Soviet leadership was shaken to its core by Reagan's SDI gambit. More to the point, Reagan backed democratic "freedom fighters," notably in Nicaragua, as a way of undermining the Soviet empire both strategically and ideologically and also of protecting America's vital interests. Yet if conservatives were willing to adopt Reagan's new hopefulness, they still firmly rejected internationalism. The Reagan administration was as famous for bashing the United Nations as for championing democracy.

To be sure, Reagan's optimism was hardly shared by all or even most conservatives. His successor, Bush I, was a conservative realist of the old Kissinger sort. Bush I went to war with Iraq in 1991 not to advance democracy but to preserve the region's balance of power in the narrowest sense. He was happy to kick Saddam Hussein out of Kuwait—but unwilling to take the fight to Iraq, either directly or by proxy. Bush I, like Kerry today, cared about "order," not democracy. So the Reagan mantle was there for the taking, and after September 11, George W. Bush made the hope of democracy, though not the internationalist credo, the centerpiece of his foreign policy.

Today, liberal idealism remains bifurcated, with each of the political parties claiming its half. Liberals like Kerry champion international-

Adam Wolfson is editor of the Public Interest.

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ism, while denouncing Bush's faith in democracy as a sign of arrogance or simple-mindedness. Conservatives like Bush sail under the banner of democracy, while skewering the liberal faith in internationalism as a sign of weakness or naiveté.

In this sense, the November election is about where best to place our hopes—with Kerry in internationalism or with Bush in democracy. Kerry argues that we should not have gone to war without the United Nations' blessing. He would get us out of Iraq by "internationalizing" the conflict—by which he means having the U.N. and the "world community" take over Iraq's governance and security. He considers U.N. Secretary General Kofi Annan America's friend. In the first presidential debate, Kerry repeatedly called for world summits, and went so far as to say that future preemptive action by the United States must pass something called "the global test."

Kerry's internationalist hopes are demonstrably false, a case of seeing the world through rose-colored glasses. The "international community" has no will of its own or guiding moral vision. The U.N. let Hussein off the hook in the 1990s, allowing him to defy its own sanctions. To believe that it would play any substantive, hands-on role in Iraq today is a pipe dream. It's even worse than that. Placing our hopes in the world community is really to put them in the likes of Saddam Hussein, since we know beforehand that the world community will do little to stop even such monsters.

Other problems beset the internationalist faith. Today's internationalism uncoupled from democratic principles is nearly indistinguishable from cynicism. The international community did nothing to stop the genocide in Rwanda in 1994, just as it stands idly by as genocide unfolds in the Darfur region of Sudan. Syria, a brutal dictatorship and state-sponsor of terrorism, sits on the U.N. Human Rights Commission. Taken by itself, internationalism is morally corrupting and politically bankrupt. Kerry's hopes are truly hopeless.

Bush's hopes in democracy are for the most part better founded. The basic idea is that democratic principles are the aspiration of all peoples everywhere, whatever their creed or culture, and that free societies will be basically peaceful ones: that a democratic Iraq or a democratic Iran will cease to bear murderous ill will towards the United States. As Bush put it in the first debate: "A free Iraq will be an ally in the war on terror. . . . A free Iraq will set a powerful example in the part of the world that is desperate for freedom. A free Iraq will help secure Israel. A free Iraq will enforce the hopes and aspirations of the reformers in places like Iran. A free Iraq is essential for the security of this country." Bush's hopes for democracy are, in a word, strategic.

The U.N. let Saddam Hussein off the hook in the 1990s. To believe it would play a substantive role in Iraq today is a pipe dream.

So whose message will resonate more with the voters? It's hard to imagine Kerry's internationalist hopes prevailing this November over Bush's democratic faith. Internationalism has a short history in this country, going back no further than Wilson, and its popularity always depended on its being paired with democracy. Once liberals dropped the latter, they faced a tough job selling the former to the American people.

The truth is that Bush has the more noble, uplifting vision, one more in accord with American ideals than Kerry's amoral internationalism. Bush's approach also has a better chance of success. We know for a fact that the U.N. will not protect our interests or our lives. In contrast, it seems reasonable to believe that most human beings reject tyranny, and that future democratic regimes in the Middle East would not export suicide-terrorists to our shores.

Of course, democracy remains a hope—uniquely America's hope—and Bush's policy has been criticized for its excesses. The Bush administration's hopes for democracy in post-Saddam Iraq led to the fanciful assumption that even months after their arrival, our troops would still be seen as "liberators." But Iraqi gratitude was never to be expected, since the war was undertaken more in self-defense than to end that country's misery. We must see our own motivations for what they are, if we are to understand the motivations of others. Similarly, the administration's undue hopefulness about the naturalness of democracy led it to mishandle the fighting of the war as well as postwar management.

But Bush has also been faulted for having too little hope in democracy, as when he enlists General Musharraf's very undemocratic Pakistan in the war on terror, or fails sufficiently to denounce Vladimir Putin's latest antidemocratic measures. The scheduled elections in Iraq are already being criticized by Bush's liberal "realist" critics for falling short of democratic standards.

The Bush administration will have the best chance of success if it keeps its democratic hopes firmly anchored in America's national interest. Rhetorically, Bush sometimes errs in the direction of abstract idealism, as when he claims that our action in Iraq has nothing to do with balance-of-power politics—though surely one of our aims is to bring about, by a democratic transition, a political balance of power in the region more favorable to our security. Bush also seems to lose sight of the delicate line he must walk when he says things like, "We have a calling from beyond the stars to stand for freedom," or freedom is "the Almighty God's gift to every man and woman in this world." Well, yes and no, but surely the principal task of our troops in Iraq is to safeguard America's freedom, not to do God's work. Usually, however, Bush avoids

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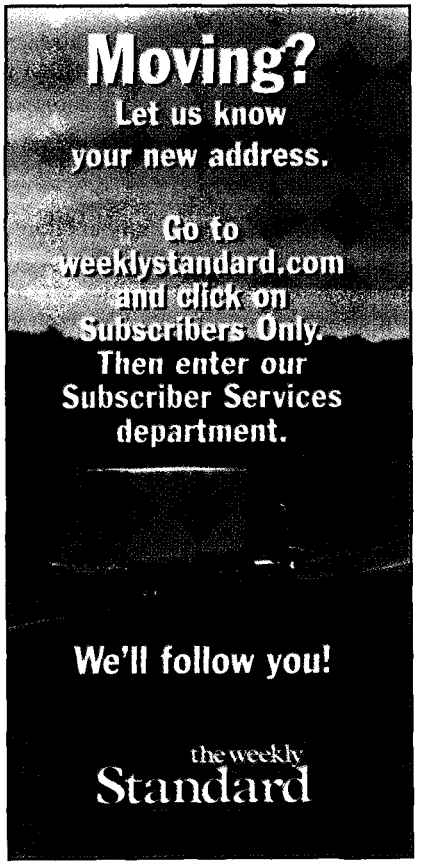
such rhetorical excesses. Certainly in his policy he is more restrained—perhaps too restrained, given what is at stake for America strategically, and given the lofty goals he has set forth.

In the first presidential debate Bush said of his policy, "I think you can be realistic and optimistic at the same time." Seeking to help guide this new policy, Charles Krauthammer characterized it as "democratic realism." The point is that our democratic hopes are genuine, but we'll act on them militarily only when our national interest requires it. Which is to say that in our engagement in the Middle East we are not simply democratic altruists. Our ultimate goal is less to make the world safe for democracy than—as Theodore Roosevelt said—to make the world safe for America. It's a policy that will entirely satisfy neither liberal internationalists nor conservative realists, but for now it is the only serious game in town, and Americans once again, however reluctantly, must learn to play it. ♦



The Good Terrorist

What happened when the Dane came home from Guantanamo. BY HENRIK BERING

Copenhagen

DANES ARE KNOWN for many things, but religious zealotry is not one of them. It therefore came as a surprise to newsreaders some two-and-a-half years ago when they learned that there was a Danish citizen among the holy warriors being held as illegal combatants at the U.S. base in Guantanamo Bay, Cuba. The man was in Afghanistan to attend an al Qaeda training camp when the United States attacked the Taliban in October 2001, and he was caught heavily armed on the Pakistani border, fleeing the American forces.

The man's name is Slimane Hadj Abderrahmane, which may not strike the reader as a typical Danish name. Abderrahmane is the 31-year-old son of a Danish mother and an Algerian father. Over the past weeks, he has again been dominating the headlines here, calling for attacks on the Danish government—"Denmark is the only country that hasn't realized that a country's leaders are legitimate targets of war in a war situation"—and forcing the Danes to reexamine their traditional notions of tolerance and open-mindedness.

Abderrahmane's is a story of integration gone spectacularly wrong. Born in 1973, he spent his first seven years in Denmark before the family moved to Algeria. He returned to Denmark and in 1997 enrolled at a Danish university, studying mathematics. But his commitment to his studies was half-hearted, and he was living the life of an aimless hedonist existing on the fringes of the techno-milieu, when he got caught up in the Islamist cause in a Danish mosque.

The television footage from Grozny in Chechnya, which was being leveled by Russian forces, was the turning point. The mosque was preaching jihad against the Russian infidels. Abderrahmane dumped the techno music in favor of male voices reciting verses from the Koran, and began adhering to the strict rituals of the true believer.

From the Danish mosque he made connections with the European terrorist network. He visited London's notorious Finsbury Park mosque, the stronghold of the one-armed cleric Abu Hamza el-Masri, dubbed "Captain Hook" by the tabloids, who was the brains behind the bombings in Yemen and is now in prison awaiting extradition to the United States. Abderrahmane is suspected of having served as a money courier in Algeria for the rebel movement GSPC before ending up in an al Qaeda training camp in Afghanistan.

When news first came out that a Dane was in American hands at Guantanamo, the Danish left-wing opposition, who are highly critical of the allied efforts in Afghanistan and Iraq, made him a *cause célèbre*, casting him as an idealist and a victim, as did the daily *Politiken*, which accused the Danish government of passivity in securing his release. Abderrahmane's case was taken up by organizations like Amnesty International, which concluded in its annual report that the Danish government was failing to uphold his human rights.

The conservative government, sensitive to the left's human rights arguments, started pressing for his release, and because of the Danish military

Henrik Bering is a journalist and critic.

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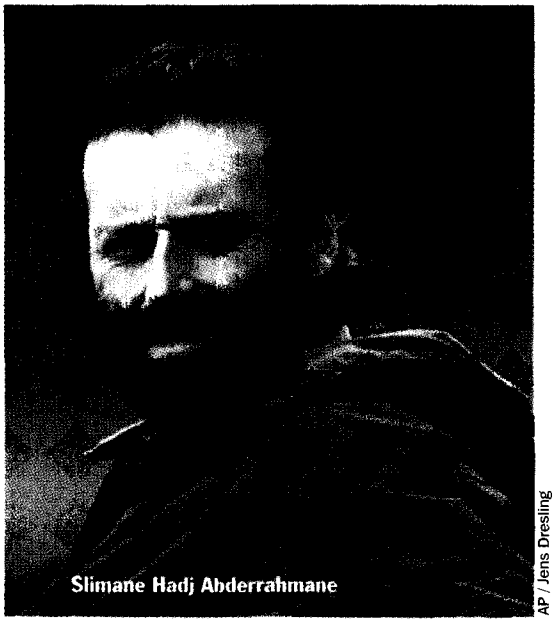
contribution to the reconstruction of postwar Iraq, the Americans met the Danish demands. Having signed a document stating that he would abstain from terrorism, would not conspire against the United States and its allies, and would not engage in holy war, Abderrahmane was released in February of this year—the first European to be released from Guantanamo. He was flown home, given a new identity and a secret address by Danish intelligence, and advised to keep a low profile.

He didn't take the advice. Since his return, rather than lying low, he has been giving interviews right and left, and a flattering book, *The Dane at Guantanamo*, has been written about him, so that his fellow Danes have gotten to know him all too well. Abderrahmane displays a curious mindset: a combination of hardened holy warrior and true product of the welfare state, who fully expects that state to help him wage war on itself.

Abderrahmane describes himself as a "good terrorist," who would never harm civilians. He denies having had contact with al Qaeda, and he carefully avoids the standard anti- Jewish rhetoric. Apart from that, he is as hardline as they come: "I do not identify myself as a Dane or an Algerian. I identify myself as a Muslim, and I will shoot anybody who fights against the cause of Allah on the battlefield." He regards democracy as incompatible with Islam and wants *sharia* law in Denmark, including the stoning of women for infidelity and the cutting off of hands of criminals, which is clearly out of step with the usual ideas of the Scandinavian criminal justice system.

As for his imprisonment, he claims to have been roughed up and humiliated by American soldiers in Kandahar (who he complains made fun of the size of his genitals). Significantly, he does not claim to have suffered torture in Guantanamo, and in fact gives a rather idyllic impression of life in the camp. When a man is taken to interrogation during his prayers, an act which causes an uproar among the inmates, the camp leadership apologizes; guards are not even permitted to say "shut up" to the prisoners. He quotes one of his interrogators as saying, "We do not do torture. We let time do the work."

Abderrahmane lost no time in letting it be known that he expected the Danish government to help him in a possible lawsuit against the U.S. government for having kept him imprisoned for two years in violation of international law. In this he was immediately supported by the Rehabilitation and Research Center for Torture Victims in Copenhagen. Its founder, Inge Genefke, has announced that she regards torture as a bigger problem in the world than terrorism.


Slimane Hadj Abderrahmane

AP / Jens Dresling

But then Abderrahmane seems to have overplayed his hand. Last week, in an interview on *DR2 Deadline*, an evening news show, he stated that he regards the Danish troops in Iraq as legitimate targets of attack, including troops who are currently training in Denmark before being sent off to Iraq. And not only that: He also regards the Danish prime minister, foreign minister, and defense minister as legitimate targets. The pronouncements caused a sensation. Even to tolerant Danes, it seemed somewhat ungrateful to want to bump off the government that has just secured his freedom.

The government is now trying to determine if Abderrahmane can be prosecuted for incitement to terrorism under the country's new anti-terrorism laws. He denies having issued direct threats, stating that he was being "purely informative" as regards Islamic attitudes to war.

After the latest furor, he announced that since he did not feel welcome in Denmark, he would go and fight on behalf of the Chechen rebels, and that the Americans could use the contract he had signed about not engaging in holy war as "toilet paper." The Russian ambassador to Denmark has asked the Danish authorities to make sure that he would not be permitted to leave the country. His passport is now deposited with the police.

The Abderrahmane farce has raised uncomfortable questions concerning Islamists in Denmark. How many more radicals of his kind are in the country? Over the past decades significant numbers of Middle Easterners have been granted asylum in Denmark, many of them of Palestinian origin. Until recently, the intelligence services were only intermittently consulted by the Immigration Service, as they were regarded as too "unempathetic" towards asylum-seekers. Intelligence sources will unofficially admit they have no idea who is in the country.

The beneficial effect of Abderrahmane's openness has been that of a reality check. It has given the Danes a firsthand look into how the mind of a terrorist operates. Suddenly it is dawning on the Danes that the detainees at Guantanamo are there for a reason. Now letters to the editor are asking if the Americans would by any chance like him back. Perhaps with a few more thrown in for good measure. ♦

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An Indecent Proposition

Do Californians really want to go deeper in debt to subsidize stem cell research? BY WESLEY J. SMITH

CALIFORNIA IS FLAT BROKE, its budget a fiscal train wreck. Expenses have so far exceeded state revenues that this spring citizens of the Golden State were forced to pass a bond measure borrowing $15 billion (not including interest) just to keep the state afloat. And now, the Piper must be paid to restore fiscal stability.

The budget crisis is causing a world of hurt throughout the state. Essential government functions are crumbling. People injured in auto accidents or suffering gunshot wounds are in greater danger of dying because hospital trauma centers are closing for lack of funds. State health care for poor children is being cut to the bone. Services for senior citizens and the developmentally disabled are being slashed. Meanwhile, neighborhood schools are being shuttered as basic infrastructure repairs go unfinished.

Now would seem to be exactly the *wrong* time for California to *borrow* a total of $3 billion ($6 billion including interest) to pay biotechnology companies and rich university research institutes to conduct research into human cloning and embryonic stem cells. And yet, this is precisely the snake oil being peddled by supporters of Proposition 71 (the California Stem Cells Research and Cures/Bond Act). No wonder legendary *Sacramento Bee* political columnist Peter Schrag—a supporter of embryonic stem cell research (ESCR)—has scathingly denigrated the measure as an "audacious raid on the treasury."

California's initiative process was created in the early twentieth century to empower ordinary citizens to thwart special interests from gaining control of the legislature. Unfortunately, the process is, these days, used just as often by the special interests themselves to buy laws that otherwise would not pass muster. These well-funded groups employ paid signature-gatherers to get initiatives on the ballot and buy massive television ad campaigns to win public approval. The campaign for Prop. 71 is a good example. Its wealthy supporters are betting that promises of CURES! CURES! CURES! in a burst of star-studded television advertising will persuade Californians to ignore the fiscal folly of Prop. 71 and its hubristic agenda.

To fully understand the radical and bitter pill that California voters are being asked to swallow, the key portions of Prop. 71 need to be unpacked. This isn't easy, given the trouble the proposition's authors took to obfuscate their meaning. But, after a careful reading, it becomes clear that Prop. 71 is an arrogant power-grab that would fund and license morally controversial areas of biotechnological research with state-borrowed money. What also becomes apparent is that Prop. 71 would strip the state government of the power to control how billions of the people's dollars would be spent.

• *Prop. 71 creates a state constitutional right to conduct research into human cloning*: It doesn't merely seek a new law permitting embryonic stem cell research, which is legal in any event. Rather, it would *amend* the California constitution to grant biotechnologists the "right" to conduct experiments in human cloning (called "somatic cell nuclear transfer" in the initiative—the same process that led to Dolly the sheep). This means another voter-approved constitutional amendment would be needed to change any of its terms.

Proponents claim that Prop. 71 also authorizes research on adult stem cells and stem cells taken from umbilical-cord blood. But looks are deceiving. The measure requires that "priority" in funding be given to "research opportunities that cannot or are unlikely to receive timely or sufficient federal funding unencumbered by limitations that would impede the research."

There are no funding limitations or significant regulatory impediments to conducting adult stem cell or umbilical-cord blood research. So those areas of inquiry will not receive priority if the amendment passes.

The same is not true of embryonic stem cell research or human cloning experiments. Federal funding of ESCR is restricted to cell lines in existence before August 9, 2001. Moreover, the federal government does not pay a dime for research into somatic cell nuclear transfer cloning, nor are there any current proposals for it to do so (although Ron Reagan's speech at the Democratic Convention promoted that course). Hence, the measure would make it a constitutional requirement that priority in funding go to human cloning research, since that area of research currently receives no federal funds, with embryonic stem cell research next in line, since there are policy limitations in place that biotechnologists claim encumber the research.

• *Prop. 71 uses obfuscating language to mask its true intent*: Although the measure is clearly created to fund experiments into cloning human embryos and research into embryonic stem cells, the word "embryo" does not appear anywhere in the text. Instead, the measure tellingly refers to embryos as mere "products." Nor is

Wesley J. Smith is a senior fellow at the Discovery Institute and a special consultant to the Center for Bioethics and Culture. His newest book, Consumer's Guide to a Brave New World, *will be published in October.*

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the term "embryonic stem cell research" used. Instead, Prop. 71 authorizes research into "pluripotent stem cells," which are defined as cells that "are capable of self-renewal, and have broad potential to differentiate into multiple adult cell types. Pluripotent stem cells may be derived from somatic cell nuclear transfer [e.g., cloning] or from surplus products of in vitro fertilization treatments when such products are donated under appropriate informed consent procedures."

Meanwhile, knowing that the majority of people oppose human cloning for any reason, the authors pretend that the measure does not permit it, using the scientific term "somatic cell nuclear transfer" as if that were not a cloning technique. The "yes on 71" campaign even sued to prevent opponents from making the ballot argument that the measure concerned human cloning, even though the text of the measure actually uses the C-word to identify the identical biotechnological activity (somatic cell nuclear transfer) required for reproduction. The judge saw through the ruse, however, ruling correctly that somatic cell nuclear transfer is, indeed, cloning, and pointed out that this "is really the heart of the debate" over Prop. 71.

Prop. 71's supporters make much of the fact that the measure would not fund reproductive cloning and that it would "initially" require that all embryo products (whether natural or cloned) used in the research be destroyed after 12 days (the modifier "initially" telegraphing that a broader license may be contemplated). But these restrictions actually mean little since the measure would pay billions for researchers to conduct the very experiments into somatic-cell nuclear transfer needed for human reproductive cloning to become a reality.

Prop. 71 would also pay researchers to learn how to reliably create and maintain cloned embryos to the "blastocyst" stage when they can be harvested for stem cells. But the blastocyst stage is also when the cloned embryos could be implanted into a woman's womb. Thus, the information gained from spending California's borrowed money could be used by others to arrange for the birth of cloned babies. Indeed, Woo-suk Hwang, the South Korean researcher who created the first, and so far only, cloned blastocysts for use in stem cell research, admitted earlier this year, to the *Korea Times*, that his cloned embryos could also have been used for reproductive cloning.

• *There are few checks and balances in Prop. 71*: Funds for Prop. 71, the measure says, "shall be continuously appropriated without regard to fiscal year . . . and not subject to appropriation or transfer by the Legislature or Governor for any other purpose." This means elected officials would have no power to alter or reduce spending on stem cell research undertaken through Prop. 71. Even if the much-feared "Big One" earthquake were to hit San Francisco, knocking the Golden Gate Bridge into the bay, biotechnologists would *still* be entitled to their $295 million of borrowed money each year!

The absurdity does not end there. Under Prop. 71, the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee, which would govern the institute that would make grant-funding decisions, would be exempt from certain aspects of California's Open Meeting laws. And the committee's relative privacy would not be easily disturbed by legislative action. Any change to Prop. 71's spending and oversight scheme could not be made until the third full year after the measure became law, and changes would require a hyper-majority 70 percent vote of both houses of the legislature and the governor's signature. Also, the Independent Citizens' Oversight Committee is sure to be packed with representatives of research institutions and disease advocacy groups, who are unlikely to be objective overseers.

There is no doubt that the supporters of Prop. 71 desire to help ill and disabled people live better lives. But passing a corporate pork-barrel constitutional amendment to pay fat-cat companies and rich universities to engage in highly speculative and morally controversial research is not the way to achieve such an end. Not only would Prop. 71 divert money needed to fund basic services and to pay off existing debt, but it would also almost certainly hasten the birth of the first cloned baby. Meanwhile, it would delay research into adult stem cells and those found in umbilical-cord blood—research that, unlike cloning and embryonic approaches, has advanced in animal studies to the point where human trials are beginning.

Peter Schrag had it just right when he awarded the corporate welfare boondoggle that is Prop. 71 "the chutzpah prize in ballot box budgeting." ♦

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Terry Eastland, Publisher

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When a Kiss Is Not Just a Kiss

Reality TV comes to the Arab world

By Matt Labash

Six months ago, in the Kingdom of Bahrain, an interesting television experiment, broadcast throughout the Middle East, came and went without much fanfare. Reality TV, in the form of *Big Brother Middle East*, made its debut, was embraced by viewers, then in just over a week was shown the door by a radical Islamist minority. Over the last few years, there have been all kinds of promises, or Panglossian utterances if you're skeptically inclined, about what we occidentals will bring to the region. Democracy's missionaries, forever in search of receptive agents of change in the Middle East, are in the habit of directing their message to people's better angels, with whom only a small minority are acquainted. They might, however, do better to contemplate people's baser natures, with which most of us tend to be on a first-name basis. The "pursuit of happiness" or the "blessings of liberty" might seem like enigmatic abstractions. But everyone can get their head around the unalienable right to watch bad TV. Or almost everyone. Which is what brings us to Bahrain.

A former British protectorate, Bahrain is generally considered a liberalized Arab nation. This, of course, is like being called the prettiest girl on the Bulgarian shot put team. The king appoints all the ministers and judges. The parliament is there to balance his power, or would be, if he didn't appoint half of them too. While the Khalifa ruling family has made some head-fakes toward enlightenment, such as letting women run for office and recently emptying the jails of political prisoners after torturing them for a few decades, it's difficult to practice democratic politics in Bahrain, since political parties are banned, and criticizing Islam or the king can earn you a fine or a prison sentence.

Still, Bahrain is "liberalized" by the Arab world's low standards, since it's a place where the unelected regime provides the right to quality shopping, to getting a drink, or to securing the services of a prostitute (technically illegal, but readily available down on aptly named "Exhibition Road," in case you're making travel plans). It's good enough for the U.S. Navy to make Bahrain home to the Fifth Fleet. And it's why, on weekends, the 16-mile-long King Fahd Causeway sees Saudis on holiday beating it over the bridge to escape their own homeland's fanatical religious strictures. With Bahrain prohibiting picture-taking in their bars and hotels, as even uptight Wahhabists need to let down their kaffiyehs now and then, tourists would do well to remember a simple maxim: Bahrain—it's not a good place to practice democracy, it is a good place to practice hypocrisy.

This being the climate, Bahrain seemed the ideal setting for the enterprising *Big Brother* producers. It's all slightly redolent of Christopher Buckley's new comic novel *Florence of Arabia*, in which State Department do-gooddnik Florence Farfaletti sets about emancipating Arab women by launching a satellite channel in the fictional emirate of Matar ("pronounced, for reasons unclear, 'Mutter'"), where burkha-clad talk-show denizens make subversive happy talk:

"My next guest—not that I can see her—are you there Farah?"

"Over here, Azad!"

"God be praised. Now, Farah, I understand you have actually driven a car? . . . Did you hit anything?"

"Just some mukfelleen religious police who were chasing me. So I backed up and ran them over again."

The real-life difference is that *Big Brother Middle East* was in no way overtly political, nor did Americans have a thing to do with it. The venture was a coproduction of Endemol, the Dutch company that has brought its *Big Brother* franchise to 26 countries throughout the world, and the Middle Eastern Broadcasting Centre (MBC). Headquartered in Dubai, MBC is the region's leading pan-Arab news channel. MBC 2, which aired *Big Brother*, is MBC's satellite entertainment channel, offering 150 mil-

Matt Labash is senior writer at The Weekly Standard.

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When Abdul met Kawthar: the infamous air kiss

lion viewers in the Middle East such Islamic staples as *Oprah*, the *Bernie Mac Show*, and *America's Funniest Home Videos*. While MBC had had ratings success with its repurposed American shows, the *Big Brother* project represented a bolder probing of what the market could withstand.

Anuska Ban, the Endemol executive director of *Big Brother*, or as she's affectionately known around their Netherlands offices "The Big Brother Mother," says Bahrain seemed a natural fit. It didn't hurt, she says, that their contact person in Bahrain, the information minister, "was a big fan of *Big Brother*—[he] knew all the British versions." Likewise, she says, it was natural that MBC approached Endemol, since their owner "was also addicted to *Big Brother*." MBC's owner is Sheikh Walid al-Ibrahim, who in an odd twist is the brother-in-law of Saudi Arabia's King Fahd, overseer of one of the region's most censorious regimes.

Reached in Croatia, Anuska is setting up her 27th incarnation of *Big Brother* (nothing says "natural dramatic tension" to a television producer like recently concluded ethnic cleansing). While it is her job to birth the show in every country where it runs, she says that Bahrain presented a steeper challenge than any other location. After MBC approached Endemol nearly three years ago, it took two and a half years to bring the show to the screen, as opposed to the three to six months it usually takes. In most countries, *Big Brother* takes place in a house that effectively serves as a prison with spare Scandinavian décor. Followed by voyeuristic cameras, twelve men and women live there with all outside influences removed, and nobody allowed out. They are filmed 24 hours a day (with the footage then edited down into 30- or 60-minute shows) living, laughing, crying, complaining, occasionally having sex, and plotting each other's demise, as each week a person is voted out of the house, until only one remains and claims a cash prize.

The prospect of unmarried men and women together under one roof was enough all by itself to send Middle Eastern bluenoses into spasms of panic, so every accommodation was made. While most *Big Brother* houses are completely gender-integrated right down to the bathrooms, the Bahrain house permitted contestants to mix it up only in the kitchen, living room, and garden. There were separate bathrooms, bedrooms, sitting areas, and prayer rooms (a prayer room, gender-segregated or otherwise, is not a regular reality-television feature).

Since the deal producers cut with the government mandated that 40 percent of the crew be Bahraini, Anuska says in her thick Dutch accent, "We had there a lot of completely inexperienced girls and boys." The guy who laid stones for the patio, started from the outside and worked his way in, running out of stones before he finished so that the patio looked like a donut. Many of the camera crew didn't know the basics, such as how to turn on the camera. "The week before," says Anuska, "They were still truck drivers or working in the bakery of their parents."

In addition to frequent sandstorms and holes in the security fence, Anuska faced political difficulties during her lengthy stay in the desert (Endemol was asked to serve as coproducer, while usually it just provides initial consulting for local partners and then leaves). While castmates were drafted from all over the Middle East, they decided not to "bring in Jewish people" since "it could be a big political issue." Anuska says that if they had brought one in, the *Big Brother* challenges would've had to look different, such as "who could make in the most fast way a suicide belt. No, no, I'm only joking, I'm only joking," she diplomatically adds (Endemol still hopes to relaunch *Big Brother Middle East* from another locale).

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Reality TV is all about exhibitionism. In the American version of *Big Brother*, there seems to be a law against female contestants covering their midriffs, and the males preen like depilated apes—even the fat guys are unable to keep their shirts on for entire episodes. But while the Bahraini house came with a standard-issue pool, "nobody was in it," says Anuska. The men brought bathing suits they didn't wear, the women didn't even bother. Likewise, Anuska says, they weren't able to film in the bathrooms, and "we could only show them in the bedrooms when they were completely dressed, or if they were under the blankets." That sort of takes the fun out of it, I suggest to her. "I know it. I know it," she says, resignedly.

An upcoming documentary for VPRO (the Dutch equivalent of the BBC) captures the cultural disconnect. Filmmaker Sarah Vos, who traded the working title "Big Brother vs. Allah" for the less incendiary "Big Brother in the Middle East," shows the casting process, which looks very standard. Most aspiring contestants already appear fairly westernized. Some, just off the plane from very conservative countries, flock to casting calls in Lebanon, where they change into hipper duds to impress producers.

Aspiring contestants say tin-eared things like, "I'm here to paint the town red. . . . I'm going to use the ladies of the street as my eyeliner, I don't get them in Doha." And they are eager to please. One Jordanian woman, her father a PLO member who was assassinated, is asked if she would talk about it in the house. "Definitely," she says, "if you needed some drama, I would." When another woman is told the house will be fairly strict, she says, "I've survived Yemen, so I can survive the house." Still, as much as they yearn for the opportunity, they are unable to betray their upbringings. When Anuska grills one contestant with typical deep-think screening questions, such as what animal does he most resemble, he squirms while his translator relays, "He finds relating himself to an animal difficult because he's a human being." Anuska adds that the young contestants asked questions, too, the kind any young person would ask at a repressive summer camp. "We told them for instance that for the men, it was forbidden to enter the women's part. The guys said, 'What is that ridiculous rule?' Also, the girls said that suppose we fall in love, 'Is it possible that we can kiss?' We said, 'Yes, but we will not show it.'"

Despite anticipating cultural speedbumps—their production was saddled with a religious "specialist," a sort of Koran-toting standards and practices watchdog—some hazards were unforeseen. In order to give the housemates something to do, producers made them take care of chickens, kept in a coop in the garden. When Abdul Hakim, an ebullient Saudi, first entered the house, he went straight for the coop, and began talking to the chickens while making clucking noises. A Saudi staffer from MBC took offense. "Afterwards," says Anuska, "the channel said 'How could you show it?' We said, 'Sorry, what was wrong?' He said, 'It is really very bad if a man from Saudi Arabia talks with chickens.' We said sorry . . . we did everything that they asked us."

Then, of course, there was The Kiss, also known as the beginning of the end. While clerics were already complaining about the show before it aired, on account of its being an Infidel-influenced abomination in which men and women cohabited, Abdul Hakim didn't help matters. Right after he talked to the chicken, he welcomed a comely Tunisian housemate by asking for a kiss of greeting. She obliged with an air-smack in the vicinity of each cheek—lips never touched skin. But from the clerical reaction, you'd have thought someone took a squirt on Mohammed's Tomb.

That first episode was generally well received. Anuska says that when contestants returned to their home countries, they were mildly and briefly famous. Ratings don't, for the most part, exist in the Middle East, but she adds that the viewer call-in response was more robust than in countries where versions of the program became bona fide hits. Likewise, the business community applauded the show (especially after it brought 20 million dinars of much-needed investment). Some editorialists, like one in the *Bahrain Tribune*, were evenhanded, discouraging a culture of mistrust in favor of "a climate of openness," one in which programs like this promote "human beings . . . moving freely and smoothly without shyness, timidity, fear or any complexes."

But over the week Bahrain's *Big Brother Middle East* aired, religious indictments came constant and loud. In a country known for only the rare public demonstration, such as turning out to stone the American embassy, over 1,000 protesters tried to storm Amwaj Island, where the show was being filmed. Seven MPs signed a demand to question the information minister, while numerous Islamic women's societies insisted he resign. Among the more timorous complainants, critics called the show "Sin Brother" and said, "This program is a threat to Islam. This is entertainment for animals," in keeping with the anti-poultry theme. One columnist called for the "Arab Cultural Marines" to act as an "intellectual, cultural and political line of defense" against the "new ideas" and "mutual understanding and tolerance" brandished by the Americans in the cultural cold war being waged through satellite channels (never mind that the satellite channel is Saudi-owned, the show was Arab-produced, and the mother ship was a Dutch company).

Sheikh Adel al-Mawda, the Bahrain parliament's second deputy speaker and a leader of Bahrain's Salafi move-

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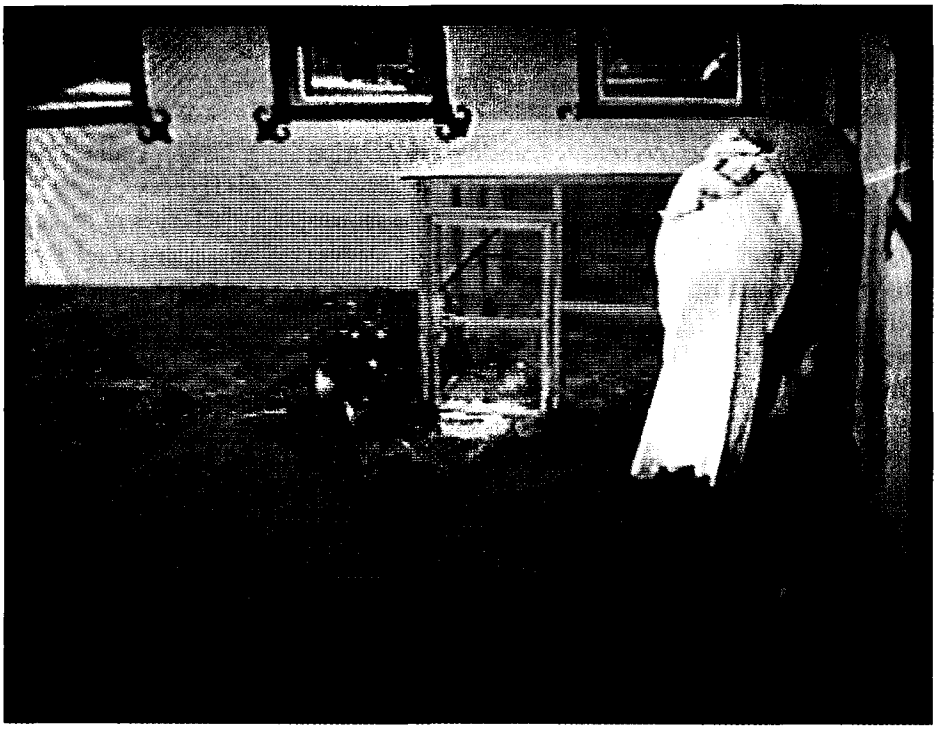
ment (commonly called Wahhabi—"salaf" means "pious ancestors" in Arabic), spearheaded protests. "This program showed an abnormal way of living, which is totally opposed to our thoughts, culture, everything," al-Mawda told the *New York Times*. "It is not reality TV at all, especially in our part of the world." And al-Mawda was right—it largely isn't reality in the Arab world, thanks to authoritarians like him. His recent legislative adventures include fighting to require that women who drive do so completely veiled (this in a country that already boasts one of the region's highest auto-accident rates). Likewise, he wants to reward anyone who imports, acquires, sells, or produces alcohol with a prison term and a fine.



Abdul meets and greets the chickens.

Such high-profile blowback is usually mother's milk to a publicity-hungry show trying to get noticed. But MBC, citing external pressure from clerics, and internal pressure from the government's information ministry, which had formerly welcomed it, quickly folded. After a little over a week on the air, after two-and-a-half years of setup and $7 million invested, and before the show had even had a chance to eject it's first housemate, MBC pulled the plug. In a statement, they cited their "desire to preserve [Bahrain's] social unity, and out of concern lest MBC constitute a reason for disagreement." Likewise, they did "not want to risk . . . being accused of harming Arab traditions and values, because it considers the channel one for the Arab family."

Since Endemol first launched the franchise in 1999, *Big Brother* has become something of an international sensation. While the American casts, battling an already celebrity-saturated culture, have never enjoyed more fame than rent-a-star status at supermarket openings, elsewhere cast members tend to have greater impact. In Germany, last year's top 1,000 singles included 12 songs from ex-castmates. In Poland, where castmates engaged in games like eating bottles of ketchup and shaving their heads, one was elected Labour Union deputy to the Polish parliament. After *Big Brother Africa* wrapped, Nelson Mandela demanded to meet the Zambian winner, offering to set her up with one of his grandsons.

As a shameless viewer of all five seasons of the American version, I can confess, with some confidence, that the show has almost no redeeming social value. Aside from the chess-master analysis that is required for weighing game strategies, it is a mindless exercise in voyeurism that mostly reveals the worst, and very rarely the best, of human nature. It's an environment in which spiky-haired steakheads, tight-bloused bimbos, and the token gay guy plot each other's ejection from the house while floating decadently in the hot tub, often inebriated. That said, the American version is tame by international standards, no sexual congress having been reported until Season 4. And even then, all we home viewers saw was the night-vision infrared of a tastefully-stretched duvet that gave the appearance of two badgers trying to escape suffocation in a gunnysack.

Outside the United States, things can get a bit randier. In other countries, contestants have made love nests under the kitchen table and engaged in nude lawn mowing. There has been sex of all varieties, including one contestant who, as a British tab memorably put it, "slipped to the loo for nookie . . . with himself." In Great Britain's "Big Brother Gets Evil" season, conceived to bolster sagging ratings, contestants appeared to have escaped from carnival exhibits. There was a gay man who only bedded straight guys, and a former garbage collector who boasted of sleeping with over 250 women, and who'd won "Mr. Best Buttocks of South Lanarkshire" (his nickname was "Shagger from the Shire"). Another, named Kitten, had been a child

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prostitute. And the show was won by a sex-starved, chain-smoking Portuguese trannie named Nadia.

Even the losers tend to be winners in the Weirdness Olympics. A girl who wasn't picked for one of the British shows said that if she was selected, she'd have to bring along her best fried "Ernie," the nickname for the glass eye she frequently popped out of its socket. While the show is by no means stocked solely with dimwits, they do seem to enjoy a commanding plurality. Political statements are mercifully rare, and tend not to be successful. One Australian contestant took it upon himself to cast a light on the mandatory detainment of immigrant refugees by taping his mouth shut, and carrying a sign that demanded someone Free The Refugees. Not only, however, did he misspell "the," but a puzzled immigration minister informed the press that there were no refugees in Australian detention centers.

All of this is to say that one doesn't have to be an Islamic fundamentalist to find *Big Brother* a deeply objectionable moral cesspool. So in the interest of fairness, I arranged for Endemol to send me all the tapes of *Big Brother Middle East*, which I then had translated by a Bahraini, just to see what got everyone's *dishdashas* in a bunch. What I saw was not a Middle Eastern bacchanal, an orgy of air-kissing and chicken-talking, but television so excruciatingly tame and dull that it made watching sand-dune erosion look like a pulse-quickening alternative.

The attractive hostess of *Big Brother Middle East* begins almost apologetically: "We are going to watch the participants 24/7," she intones, "of course, respecting their privacy." As the contestants arrive one by one, disembarking from a camel then walking through a cloud of '80s style dry-ice smoke that suggests they are getting locked into a Styx concert instead of their new home, we are shown their introduction videos. Wearing traditional Arab dress, Abdul Hakim, the first arrival and soon-to-be-infamous Kissing Bandit, says he likes to "be a part of any adventure" and likes "to jump from high places" (bungee jump). Before he disgraces his countrymen by talking to chickens, it should be noted, he proudly carries the Saudi flag, and congratulates "King Fahd, crown prince, and the government," later telling housemates that the flag, which reads "There is no God but Allah and Mohammed is His messenger," is "the best flag in the whole world."

His kissing co-conspirator, Kawthar from Tunisia, seems somewhat subversive, since she has a dangerous dream: "to have a comedy program produced by me." She assures Hakim that "we are all brothers and sisters" and that she is a "very social person." Mazim from Iraq says he always does his best to "make the people around me happy," while Shatha from Bahrain says that she loves to act, read, sing, and do "anything that is crazy and different." "Shatha is crazy," seconds a friend in her video. "I am crazy a little bit," thirds Shatha, who adds, "A woman from a Persian Gulf country in this program is something nice and is not expected." Bashara from Lebanon favors the color schemes of an abstract painting. He owns a boutique, and is gay, but doesn't dare mention it. He does, however, let fly that "I am funny and fun to be around. I am crazy also." (There are a lot of self-described "crazy" people in the house, which is perhaps why a psychiatrist is kept on call.)

Ala'a, a portly lass from Oman, is one of the few women who dress in the traditional hijab and abaya. She does not claim to be crazy, but obviously is. A friend tattles that one thing she hates about Ala'a is "that she makes a whole pot of macaroni, and then she eats all of it by herself." As the new castmates check out their digs, things quickly degenerate into, well, craziness. Stone-cold wild man Hakim boasts of entering the forbidden female section of the house. Najwa, a Syrian Joan Jett with heavy eye makeup, warns him, "You know you are not supposed to do so." "But no one was there," protests Hakim. "We have to watch every word we say here," says Ala'a, perhaps accustomed to the real-life Big Brothers back home. "We have cameras everywhere."

From there, it is off to the races. We watch them sleep in, snore, play slapjack, discuss Islamic activism, pray five times daily, plot passage to more liberal London, do calisthenics, and watch Hakim, the Saudi, gently berate the women: "How come you girls don't know how to make tea? . . . Today Abdulla and Bashara were cooking, and the rest of the girls were sitting. What is going on here?"

The women, in segregated quarters, periodically discuss their wish for divorce from abusive spouses, or tell tales of getting smacked around by boyfriends. This should hardly be considered taboo in the Arab world. MBC recently broadcast a report on a Saudi TV talk-show host who was beaten so badly by her husband that she ended up unconscious in the hospital. He defended it, saying Islam forbids beating women on the face, but permits it as a means of punishment. According to the Middle East Media Research Institute (MEMRI), Arab TV stations "frequently air rulings by Muslim clerics who explain how and when a husband is allowed to beat his wife."

As elimination-show Machiavels, the housemates are hopeless. While such shows are usually populated by saber-toothed backbiters, here is a verbatim series of responses when each Bahrain housemate is asked about the competition: "I can't express how happy I am to be here. . . . I am not upset by anyone. . . . I liked all of them. . . . Every one of them has something nice about them. . . . All of them

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cooperate. . . . Every day is better than the previous day." About the meanest thing anyone says comes when Michael, a Jordanian jeweler who loves salsa dancing, says that Shatha is constantly trying to show off her singing ability: "You can easily tell when someone has a beautiful voice, and Shatha is not that person."

Most of the cast attempts to pass as westernized, but that doesn't mean they don't have uniquely Middle Eastern back-stories. Mazim, the habitually smiling Iraqi contestant who plays the oud, an Arabic lute, is shown in the behind-the-scenes documentary, "Big Brother in the Middle East," sitting in a hotel room with his father. During the show, he claims that he'll someday return to Iraq after the Americans stop "drinking our gas," but now he lives in London. In the documentary, the interviewer asks his father if he will miss his son when he goes on the show. He responds that he has already missed his son for a long time. Mazim tells the tale of how they were separated for 19 years. "When I saw him for the first time, I didn't recognize him," says the father. "They put him in prison," Mazim says of his father. "He was losing weight because they were torturing him." When they let him go, "he fled to Turkey, and he didn't have time to think about us." As he says this, his father looks out the window while trying to nonchalantly smoke a cigarette, but his eyes well with tears.

There are few such dramatic moments in the actual series. After the third or fourth mind-numbing hour, there is a wacky charm to the whole enterprise. Sure, it's awful television: static, drama-free, without narrative payoffs. But there is, even in its dullness, a frivolous excitability—the kind one sees when small children are allowed to stay up past their bedtimes. Rather than plot how to cut each other's throats, the housemates seem to relish each other's company. There is no sex or even skin (the most I saw was a little calf when a woman indiscreetly stretched in her Capri pants). Instead, they seem to be enjoying innocent flirtation, saying their piece (however obliquely), and taking refuge in a gender-integrated oasis without getting whacked on the knuckles by some overbearing mullah.

When the group's staunchest traditionalist, Ala'a, goes into the "confessional"—a one-on-one private interview with producers—she admits, "I am depressed because I know one day I have to choose two people to leave this house and I don't find any reason to do so." Ala'a needn't have worried. The show was canceled before she ever got the chance.

When my Bahraini translator, Husain Abdulla, returned the *Big Brother* tapes, I asked him what he thought of the show. Husain is a secularist who fled his country, afraid for his safety after becoming a political dissident, and after a friend of his was killed in jail for becoming the same. He now lives in the United States, and agitates on behalf of the Bahrain Freedom Movement, which advocates true democracy.

Husain doesn't care much for reality TV. He's a political junkie who in his homeland wasn't permitted to practice politics. So these days he sticks to C-SPAN and *Hannity & Colmes*. ("Why don't they put on a stronger liberal than this guy Colmes?" he asks.) Of the *Big Brother* hullabaloo, he says, "I might have marched with the clerics too. Not because the show was an offense against Islam. But because it was so boring." What really drives him crazy is that the impression was given that extremists drove it off the air, when he says the ruling family had a vested interest in watching that happen.

Bahrain, he says, is a place where, "in the morning, . . . people . . . have a big disagreement. But when it comes night, they sleep in the same bed." It's a typical Arab pincer move, he says. An oppressive government that wants to look reform-minded to the West allows extremists to flourish as an object lesson in what could happen if they ever truly opened up the country. The whole thing has the fixed-match quality of professional wrestling. "The point of [canceling] *Big Brother*," says Husain, "was to show the people of Bahrain are barbaric, they're fanatic, and they're not worthy of democracy."

Husain says that when he arrived in this country, "I was a crazy man. I couldn't believe all the freedoms—that you could fall asleep in your apartment, and not have to worry about police breaking in in the middle of the night to arrest you for something you said earlier that day. I love America. My dream is to have a small America in Bahrain."

In a strange way, for Husain and his fellow dreamers, the best hope of little Americas developing in the Middle East could be Arab-produced reality TV. For it provides many of the benefits of Americanization (demonstrations of openness, individuality, freedom of expression) without the sticky business of its being foisted on them by Americans.

The genre has burgeoned over the last year, with varying results. The first Arab reality show, *Al Hawa Sawa* (or "On Air Together"), debuted last year on MBC. The show, which allowed Arab suitors to size up their prospective women, then propose marriage, ended disastrously when Islamists ran it off the air (but not before the winning bride locked herself in the bathroom, refusing to get married).

Iraq has also recently entered the reality-TV sweepstakes, with shows evincing Iraq's own rather bleak reality. Carried on the independent satellite channel Al Shar-

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qiya, reports the *Washington Post*, are sunny pick-me-ups with titles like *Ration Card* and *Iraq's Most Melancholy Home Videos*. Then there's *Labor Plus Materials*, a knock-off of Ty Pennington's *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, except instead of selecting families with ugly couch patterns or Formica countertops, hard-hatted saviors rebuild war-damaged homes.

The *Gulf News* reports that advertising rates on Arab satellite during reality programming can actually reach up to 130 percent of regular primetime rates, demonstrating a tremendous appetite for the shows. In fact, some actually speculated that the Arab League Summit was postponed this year for fear of being overshadowed by an *American Idol* knockoff called *Star Academy*, broadcast by the Lebanese Broadcasting Company (LBC). The show, which features 16 men and women living together in a Beirut villa, then singing their little hearts out while Arabic viewers phone in votes to see who advances, has caused outpourings of bile from the cleric class.

The imam of Mecca's Grand Mosque urged TV execs to cease "the vice and debauchery," calling the shows "weapons of mass destruction that kill values and virtue." The Council of Senior Ulema, Saudi Arabia's top religious authority, went as far as issuing a fatwa telling the program's funders not to "use their money to destroy the youth of the [Islamic] nation." (One of the funders, circuitously, is Saudi Prince Al-Walid bin Talal—King Fahd's nephew—who owns 49 percent of LBC.) It's pretty heavy artillery to aim at singing and dancing kids. But fans don't seem to be deterred. As one told Jordan-based *Al-Bawaba*, "This program for the first time has given Arab youth the chance to vote for other people than the dinosaurs who govern them."

Echoing the democracy-in-action sentiment was Ihab Hamoud, one of the organizers of another Lebanon-based smash-hit, *Superstar*, also an *American Idol*-style vote-off show: "It's probably the only democratic election in the Arab world," he told the *Financial Times*. So threatening is the format to some, that even the terrorists at Hamas weighed in with a denunciation: "Our people are in need of heroes, resistance fighters and contributors to build the country, and are not in need of singers, corruption mongers and advocates of immorality." But the Pan-Arabic singing contest claims some unusual fans. Yasser Arafat became so addicted that he offered weekly phone support to the Palestinian finalist, calling him "a Palestinian struggler of a different kind." Reality TV junkie Muammar Qaddafi went even further, flying both the Palestinian and Libyan finalists to his tent for a confab. (Palestinians have hinted darkly that Qaddafi, in typical Middle Eastern fashion, rigged the vote to make the Libyan win by providing free phone lines to Libyans, while forbidding them to vote for the Palestinian.)

Many Westerners, of course, will remain suspicious of any format that, in its more debased versions, has contributed to the cultural rot of their own society (Endemol is currently developing a show called *Sperm Race*, in which men compete for the crown of "most virile man" and to "win a sexy sports car"). But not all the Middle Eastern critics focus on decadence. Political analyst Khaldun Sulh told *Al-Bawaba* that programs such as these "are not so innocent. They are meant to keep Arab youth away from national causes at a time that Iraq is occupied by imperialism." (Let's hope.)

Western Cassandras also frown on the prospects of instilling true democracy in the Middle East not via the spread of ideas but by depending instead on the spread of synthetic-cultural artifacts like reality TV. But even these people, such as *Jihad vs. McWorld* author Benjamin Barber, admit that the latter insures an unfair fight: "If the choice is ultimately to be (as the French writer Debray has argued) 'between the local ayatollah and Coca-cola'—if 'the satellite [TV dish] is exactly against the honorable Prophet, exactly against the Koran'—the mullahs will lose, because against satellite television and videocassettes they have no long-term defense."

Nimrod Raphaeli, an Iraqi who now works for MEMRI's Washington, D.C., office, further elucidates: "No Arab regime, not even Saudi Arabia, can keep up with the flow of information coming in from across the border. Don't look at the veiled woman, look behind the veil. Saudi television can be as religious as they want it to be. But they don't watch it. They watch Lebanese television with beautiful women dancing. They should continue to do that. You'll have a whole new generation coming up in the Middle East that is absorbing enormous amounts of Western culture, which competes against a school system in which teachers teach them martyrdom and jihad. Don't try to tell them all the time to be liberal and democratic. Continue to get these programs to them. It's more effective than speeches by the State Department and the president, saying 'democracy will come.' It is the most effective weapon."

In fact, while there's plenty of precedent, both ancient and recent, to suggest true reform may never take hold in the Middle East, there is some reason to think that if a road to democracy does exist in the Arab world, it could run right past the *Big Brother* hot tub. As one source in the Arabic entertainment industry tells me, at once secretive and defiant, "We will continue to put these shows on the air. And the Islamists will continue to take them off. Let them. The old men are turning the young people against them. Their time is passing. Eventually, they will lose." ♦

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Neo-Tories?

Michael Howard's Conservative party tries to retool for the twenty-first century

By Irwin M. Stelzer

Bournemouth

This seaside resort town has seen better days. So has the Tory party, which last week convened here for its annual conference. The town was devastated when cheap airfares made the sun and beaches of Spain affordable for vacationing Brits. The Tories were devastated when they first deposed their electoral meal ticket, Margaret Thatcher, and then descended into intraparty feuding over the role of Britain in Europe, treated themselves to a round of sex and finance scandals that made a mockery of their "Back to Basics" theme, and ruined their reputation for economic management by joining a European currency system that subjected voters to double-digit inflation and interest rates.

But Bournemouth is on the upswing. One out of four workers is now employed in the business and financial services sector, with J.P. Morgan Chase alone providing over 4,000 good jobs. House prices are rising, and the pensioners who dominated the landscape are being replaced by a younger, night-life-loving generation.

The Tories, too, seem to be on a bit of a roll. Although they have just taken a beating in a local by-election, coming in fourth in a Labour stronghold behind Tony Blair's candidate, the antiwar and very green Liberal Democrats, and a fringe party that wants Britain to quit the European Union, the smell of dissension and defeat that characterized last year's conference was absent. In its place was a perhaps overly optimistic appraisal by the party's able co-chairman, Maurice Saatchi (he of advertising agency fame). Lord Saatchi, as he now is known in recognition of his creation of the advertising campaign that helped propel Margaret Thatcher into No. 10 Downing Street, thinks the party has a chance not only to whittle down Labour's huge parliamentary majority, but to replace it with a Tory government.

That will depend on two things. As in George Bush's America, so in Tony Blair's Britain: A large number of voters are angry that their country is sinking into what they see as a quagmire in Iraq. Indeed, Blair's problem is greater than Bush's. The prime minister took his nation to war solely on the basis of a stated need to eliminate the weapons of mass destruction he believed were in Saddam's arsenal, whereas the president offered several additional reasons, among them ending Saddam's support of international terrorism.

Besides, Blair has to cope with an undertone of "it's all Israel's fault"—an argument raised by former Tory defense secretary Malcolm Rifkind less than two minutes into a debate he and I had about U.K.-U.S. relations at one of the many fringe meetings that make these conferences interesting. Rifkind not only blames much of the turmoil in the Middle East on "the excesses of Israel," but characterizes Britain's so-called special relationship with America as a one-way street down which America parades at its own pace and in its own direction, making Tony Blair mere putty in Bush's powerful hands—Bush's poodle, as Blair's opponents put it.

Tory leader Michael Howard is somewhat more nuanced—in the good, rather than the John Kerry, sense of the word. He manages to combine his attacks on Blair, who he says deliberately lied to Parliament about weapons of mass destruction, with support for America's decision to depose Saddam Hussein. Howard knows that his support for the war is not a vote-getter, but he is both an America-loving Mets fan, and a man who can sympathize with the horrors inflicted on Iraqis by Saddam. His parents avoided extermination in the Nazi death camps by fleeing to Britain, where he became a successful barrister. His chances of succeeding Blair are made more difficult by a poll showing that 25 percent of British voters say they will not vote for a Jew.

Nothing much Howard can do about that. But he is attempting to restore his party's credibility by promising not to promise what he can't deliver. What he can deliver,

Irwin M. Stelzer is a contributing editor to The Weekly Standard, *director of economic policy studies at the Hudson Institute, and a columnist for the* Sunday Times *(London).*

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he says, is a successful war on crime. He would free the cops from paperwork so that they can patrol the streets and arrest the bad guys, encourage judges to put them away for a long time (repealing a Labour early release program that has seen 3,600 crimes committed in the last five years by the beneficiaries of this leniency), build more prisons, and adopt a zero-tolerance policy. Former New York mayor and future presidential candidate Rudy Giuliani has a large and enthusiastic following here in Britain, so Howard promises, "What Giuliani did in New York, . . . we'll do for the whole of Britain."

Predictably popular stuff. Equally well received was Howard's attempt to begin to construct a conservative framework on which to hang individual policies. Since Thatcher was forced into retirement by disgruntled plotters in her party, conservatives in Britain have not found a consistent theme. First, they decided to change their image as fuddy-duddies and wooed the gay vote, the Muslim vote, the black vote, and the votes of other identifiable groups that consistently vote Labour. In the process they alienated their core voters, and all for naught: They were about as successful as Republicans have been in persuading America's Jews and blacks to abandon the Democrats.

Then they lurched in the other direction, using their core voters' antipathy to welfare scroungers—of which there are many in Britain—as the basis for what seemed to be an attack on the very foundations of Britain's welfare state. It is one thing to be outraged at the 23-year-old pregnant mother of four who, along with her 19-year-old husband, receives almost $1,000 per week in benefits, and applies for a still-larger government-funded house to accommodate her growing family, while her husband announces that he has not and never will take a job because that would be shirking his responsibility as a father. It is quite another to seem unsympathetic to the deserving poor.

Now, Britain's conservatives seem to have learned Irving Kristol's lesson—"assume that the welfare state is with us, for better or worse, and that conservatives should try to make it better rather than worse." They are calling for generous benefits to the elderly, and plan to make the pension system that Labour has converted from an assured entitlement into an underfunded and degrading means-tested system "better rather than worse." Whether Howard's plans will do that remains to be seen, but his statement, "If you want to know about a country, look how it cares for older people," suggests that compassionate conservatism has replaced Tory hardline hankering after the trusty old poorhouse system.

More important, a coherent superstructure seems to be emerging from the Tory policy review. Parents should have the right to choose the school best suited to their children, and patients the right to choose the hospital that will treat them quickly and competently. This program of extending individual freedom of choice is radical stuff for a country in which voters have long been unaccustomed to such freedoms, and in which only the well-off and government ministers can beat the system by placing their children in private or superior state-run schools, and by jumping the unconscionable queues that characterize the government-run National Health Service. Similarities with George W. Bush's plans to allow parental choice of schools and to encourage individual medical savings accounts are no coincidence: Several Tories attended the Republican convention, and are in constant touch with conservatives in America.

The Tories have also found their voice in what may prove to be the first election in a very long time in which foreign policy plays an important role. In part to offset the attraction of a get-out-of-Europe fringe party, the Tories are promising to repatriate sovereignty to Westminster from Brussels, to end their adherence to the Human Rights Act that has hampered the deportation of bogus asylum-seekers, to regain control of fishing rights in British waters, and to strike a new deal with the European Union, allowing those countries that want further integration to proceed, with Britain opting out of those arrangements it believes not to be in its national interest. From America's point of view, the less sovereignty Britain cedes to the America-hating Franco-German axis, the better.

And then there is Iraq and the relationship with America. Smelling Blair's blood when the inspectors failed to find weapons of mass destruction, Howard expressed buyer's remorse at his support for the war. That opportunism unsettled many in his party, and reportedly so enraged Karl Rove and President Bush that Howard was barred from the White House. So at the party conference, Tory policy changed: It got tougher on Blair but, at the same time, more supportive of the war in Iraq. Blair, says Howard, "did not give a truthful account of the intelligence he received" on weapons of mass destruction. But that lie notwithstanding, "It was right to go to war. . . . The world is a better place without Saddam Hussein." George Bush couldn't have said it better (and didn't in his first debate with John Kerry).

So far, so good. It is when it comes to tax policy that the Tories fail to reflect what conservatives in America have learned—tax cuts are a good idea, especially if they are the right tax cuts. True, the Tories—whose last sitting prime minister, John Major, imitated George Bush the elder by raising taxes despite a campaign pledge not to do so—came up with a promise to lower taxes, but only when circumstances permit. Moreover, they haven't learned a thing about supply-side economics. Not the silly version that says that all tax cuts are self-financing, but the sensible ver-

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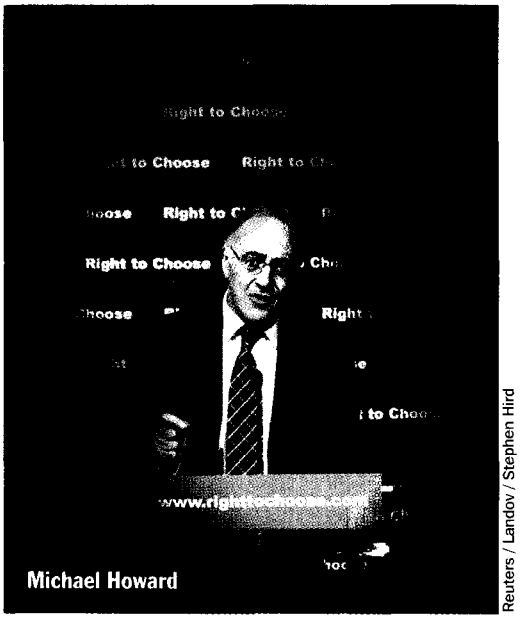
sion that teaches that tax cuts should be designed to encourage work and risk-taking.

The Tories are saddled with a shadow chancellor (think a combination of our secretary of the treasury and budget director, in-waiting) more literate than numerate. Oliver Letwin caused great unhappiness among the party faithful by failing to promise to cut taxes. Instead he used his conference speech to make "The Moral Case for Low Taxation," while at the same time refusing to commit his party to act on that moral case, on the ground that he just can't predict the state the British economy will be in come the general election. This left unanswered the question of how a shadow chancellor unable to see ahead a few months would be able to make the forecasts every chancellor must make when putting together a budget. It is as if Alan Greenspan told Congress that he can't be expected to see a few months ahead when setting interest rates.

There is worse. Letwin did make one promise—to match Labour spending on health care and education and, belatedly, after much pressure from defense-minded party colleagues, to increase spending on the frontline military. Unless the Tories are prepared to run massive deficits, this spending pledge virtually rules out any significant tax cuts—unless you believe their claim that they can finance the cuts by sweating the fat out of government. Of course, as Ronald Reagan demonstrated with the famous asterisk in his budget—"other savings to be determined"—all politicians fall back on such savings when they can't figure out how to square their spending plans with their tax-cutting pledges. Clearly, it will be difficult for Letwin to honor his pledge to spend like Labour without also taxing like Labour.



Michael Howard

Reuters / Landov / Stephen Hird

But new polls in Britain show that voters are groaning under the tax burden imposed by Labour. So the Tories have hinted—a hint is not a promise—that they are examining the possibility of reducing the inheritance tax and a tax on house sales. It seems that the value of houses, especially but not only in the southeast of the country, has risen so rapidly that many voters now have taxable estates. That, says Letwin, "has become plain unfair."

Unfortunately, the party has chosen opportunism over coherence. Both the tax on house sales and the tax on inheritance are levies on what might be called unearned windfalls. The person selling a house, on whom the burden of the tax falls, has seen his property appreciate in value because of macroeconomic conditions beyond his control—full employment, rising wages, low interest rates. And the inheritor of an estate has been lucky in the genetic lottery. It is hard to make an equity argument for these taxes to be the first ones lowered by a low-tax, conservative government.

More important, it is impossible to make an economic argument for lowering taxes on home sales and inheritances. Tax cuts should not be mere scrambles for the votes of house sellers and heirs. Reductions should have a sounder purpose: to stimulate people to work harder and take greater entrepreneurial risks, thereby generating income and wealth, and some tax revenues to boot. That is the route to rising national prosperity. The way to encourage such added effort is to cut taxes on additional earnings—to reduce marginal tax rates. Some of the Tories with whom I spoke are well aware of this, but despair of educating their current fiscal-policy team on the need to concentrate on tax cuts that increase incentives to work.

In Britain, the lowest tax rate of 10 percent applies to earnings in excess of only about $8,500, and the highest marginal rate of 40 percent cuts in at around $50,000—no matter the size of one's family. So taxes here bite into the incremental take-home pay of many police, teachers, secretaries, and other non-rich workers. These working people know that 40 percent of their next 1,000-pound raise (similarly situated taxpayers in America are subject to a marginal rate of 15 percent) will go to the government, making it less worthwhile to work those boss-pleasing extra hours. But lower the tax on marginal incomes, and the work-vs.-leisure calculus changes in favor of work and entrepreneurial risk-taking.

That's what supply-side economics is all about—a policy worth promising, and a promise worth keeping. The Tories, who have sent teams to America to learn about polling and the other mechanics of politics, and who now understand that U.S.-style compassionate conservatism appeals to many British voters who want to do the right thing by their truly needy neighbors, without creating an overweening state, might consider sending over a team led by Michael Howard to learn about the electoral and economic virtues of a bit of supply-side tax cutting. ♦

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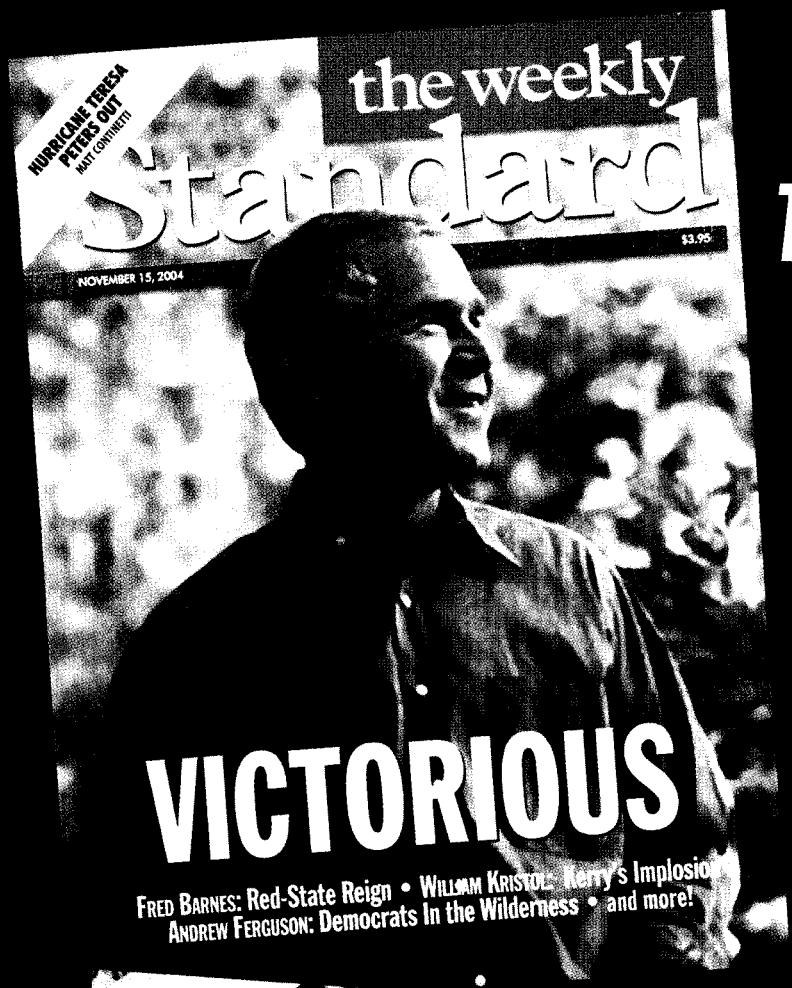

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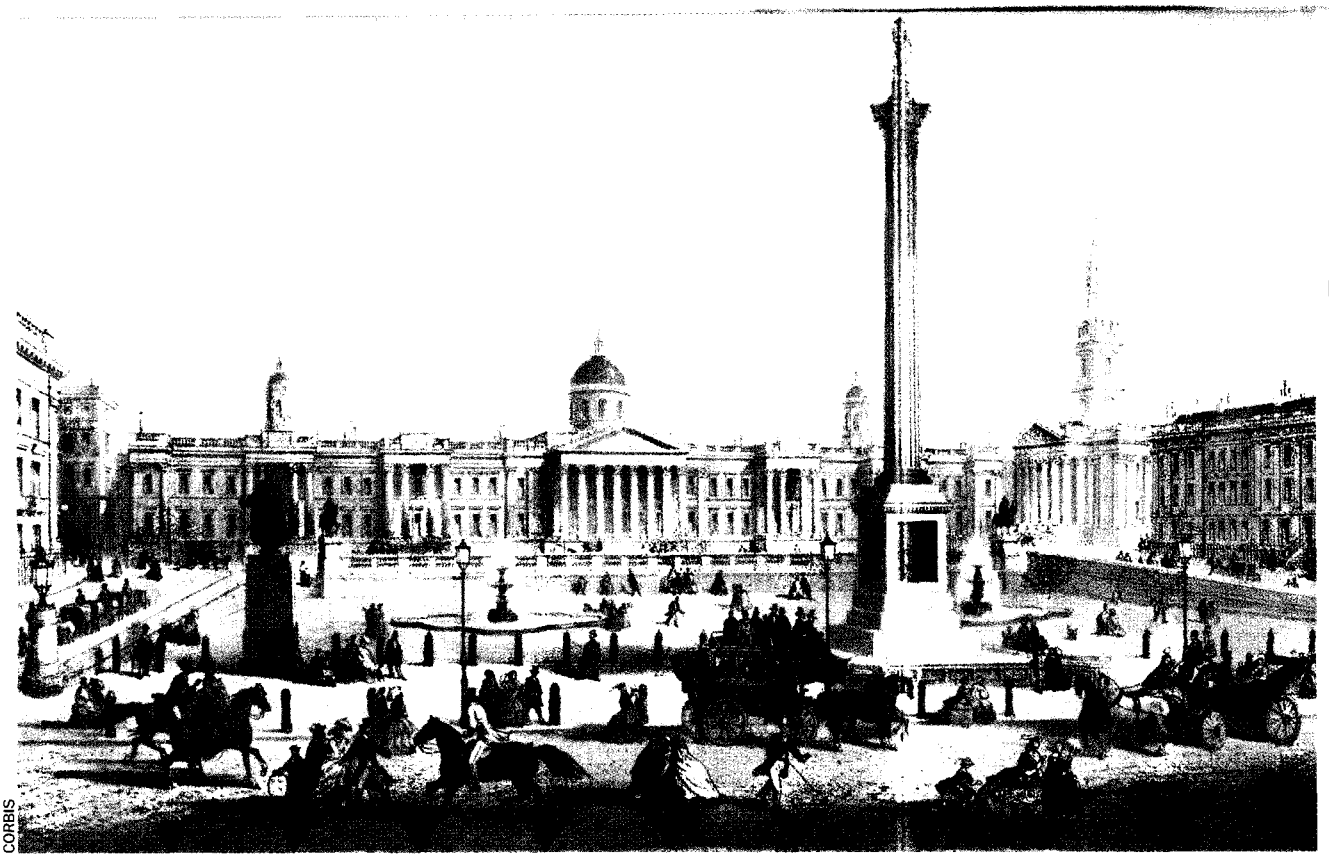

CORBIS

The Magic of England

Susanna Clarke's novel of the fairy isle. By GREGORY FEELEY

The canonical legend of Great Britain has long been that of King Arthur and the Round Table—the national epic or "the Matter of Britain," as it has been called since the twelfth century. Popular with poets, the Arthur cycle is firmly ensconced in England's literary culture, the story that explains the nation's origin and nature to itself.

But a second tale, less structured and obdurately common, runs through British culture, often flourishing in what were considered subliterary venues such as children's rhymes yet proving, at least since Tennyson's day, more popular than the Knights of the Round Table. Stories of English life touched by the world of fairies—capricious, inconsistent in their attitude toward humankind, finally unknowable—have held audiences at least since the late Medieval era, when the word "fairy" (from the French *faerie*, "enchantment," and evidently introduced after the Norman Conquest), with its suggestions of refinement, displaced the stolid Anglo-Saxon word "elf." The idea of fairies forming a hidden supernatural aristocracy certainly predates Spenser and Shakespeare, and seems to distinguish the English tales of wee folk from those of Scotland and Ireland. Perennially popular while tales of King Arthur often falter (another big-budget film failed this summer), they might be called the Matter of England.

Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell
by Susanna Clarke
Bloomsbury, 800 pp., $27.95

Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell, Susanna Clarke's very long first novel, has been described by its publishers as "Harry Potter for grownups." However seriously Bloomsbury Press may take this ambition (and they have been prudent enough not to mention it in their dustjacket copy), the comparison is misleading. The appeal of J.K. Rowling's novels involves (among other things) the pleasures of school adventures, the ironic juxtaposition of a magical world with the mundane contemporary one, and the pathos of the young orphan, none of which Clarke's book shares.

Clarke's England of 1806 is the one we know, war-weary and unmagical, but this England has a slightly different provenance, for magic is understood to have once existed, a major force in British history that disappeared centuries earlier. A society of "theoretical magicians" (meaning historians of magic) in York learns of a reclusive gentleman who claims actually to practice magic. When they express to him their doubts, he maneuvers them into

Gregory Feeley's novel Arabian Wine *will be published this winter.*

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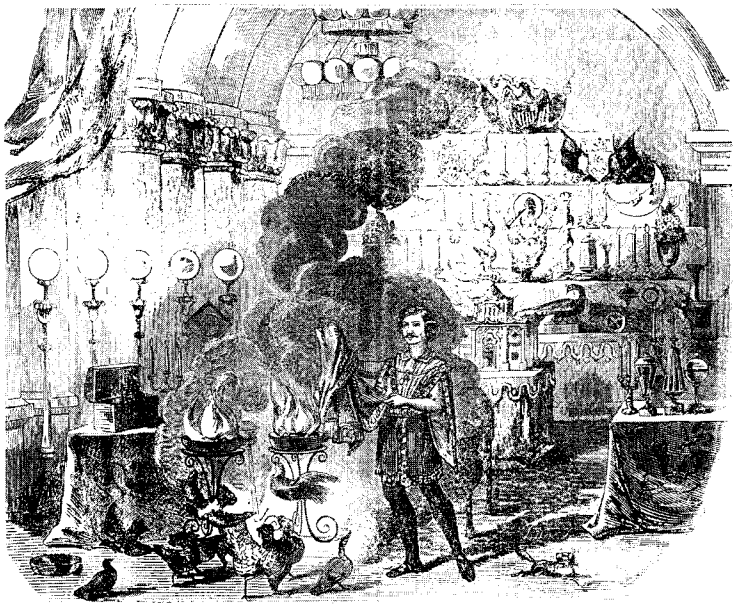


CORBIS

A nineteenth-century magician

agreeing to forgo all claims of being magicians if he successfully demonstrates his powers, which he then does spectacularly. He is Mr. Norrell, retiring and fretful, but so intent upon remaining England's sole magician.

Clarke's tale of Mr. Norrell's rise to eminence, his eventual confrontation by Jonathan Strange—young, self-educated (Norrell has spent decades buying up all surviving old books of magic), bold where Norrell is tremulous—and their eventual uneasy rapprochement is recounted over nearly eight-hundred pages, in a narrative voice that is stately, assured, and pleasantly matter-of-fact. "Be that as it may," she writes, "Mr. Norell (a less fanciful person than I) was satisfied with his new house, or at least as satisfied as any gentleman could be who for more than thirty years has lived in a large country-house surrounded by a park of mature timber, which is in its turn surrounded by a good estate of farms and woods—a gentleman, in other words, whose eye has never been offended by the sight of any other man's property whenever he looked out of the window."

Reviewers have blithely likened Clarke's style to that of Jane Austen, but the points of resemblance are mostly superficial. Austen gets down to business briskly, while Clarke engages in a curious narrative strategy of continual deferral and delay. The first chapter commences with a discussion of the magicians of York, then focuses on two of them, Jonathan Segundus and Mr. Honeyfoot. They are described, their budding friendship dramatized, and the reader would (save for its title) swear to being in the presence of the novel's protagonists. Mr. Norrell is first mentioned merely as "another magician" in Yorkshire, and he is discussed, written to, and his reply received (and quoted at length) before we are finally told, in a parenthesis, his name.

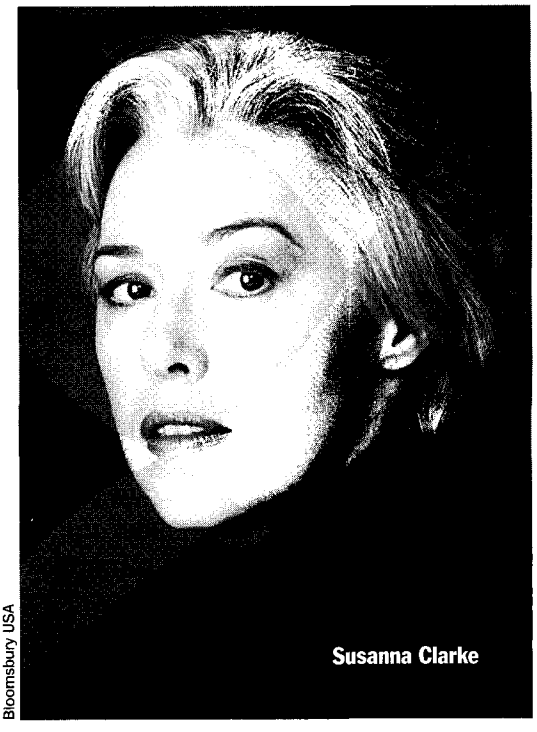
And while Jonathan Strange is mentioned on the very first page, it is in a footnote, as the author of a book published years later. He eventually makes a number of such out-of-text appearances—cited as the author of one book, the subject of another, and occasionally noted for his various acute observations—but it is nearly two-hundred pages before he actually shows up. (Even then, another Strange is first proffered, just as another Jonathan had been: We are given a chapter-long account, both droll and faintly grotesque, of the life and death of his father.)

This might seem an oddity or an affectation (none of the early reviews have mentioned it), but Clarke's repeated proffering of false doubles goes deep. The seeming priority of Jonathan Segundus to Jonathan Strange is asserted only (as his last name suggests) to be undermined, as the reader—recalling whose name is in the title—appreciates from the outset.

Volume I of the novel is entitled "Mr. Norrell" and Volume II "Jonathan Strange," another reversal of priority, but Volume III is "John Uskglass," the name of a long-vanished great wizard, the Raven King who ruled Northern England for three hundred years. Uskglass never makes an appearance at all (save, perhaps, near the novel's conclusion); that the novel's schema places him on equal footing with its two eponymous figures is the first clear indication that *Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* must be the first installment of a longer work.

Clarke defers some matters only by serving up others, and her accounts of Mr. Norrell's reluctant social conquest of London, or Jonathan Strange's magical apprenticeship aiding the Duke of Wellington in the Peninsular War, are witty and engaging. A spell performed by Mr. Norrell attracts the attention of a figure known only as "the man with the thistledown hair," a fairy prince whose urbane superiority to the messy matters of humankind evokes all the allure and danger of dealing with the elusive folk who seemed to inhabit the unmapped margins of the English countryside for centuries after the Romans departed.

Keats was alive and writing during the period (1806-1817) of Clarke's novel, and although he is not explicitly mentioned (unlike Byron, who makes a few appearances), a passing reference



Bloomsbury USA

Susanna Clarke

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to the "cold hillside" makes clear that his vision of enchantment and devastation following upon any dealings with *faeries* is very much on Clarke's mind. John Uskglass, a human, has been stirred by the magicians' dabbling—it is this eventuality that Mr. Norrell's pettish-seeming efforts to discourage the spread of magic were intended to prevent—and a volume yet to come will deal with his return; but the present novel is concerned, like much English folklore, with those possibly soulless creatures who are somehow more than human and somehow less.

Clarke's prose is rich rather than spare (imagine the plush upholstery of Trollope, not the clean lines of Peacock), and her tendency to let even her digressions curl luxuriantly upon themselves has moved some reviewers to complain of the novel's length. Some careful trimming would certainly have helped the book—the sheer density of texture occasionally threatens to sag, and a few striking details fall flat when mentioned a second time—but Clarke is a writer of amplitude, and it is difficult not to read her own credo into Strange's comment regarding his own forthcoming book: "I am not one of those miserly authors who measure out their words to the last quarter ounce. I have very liberal ideas of authorship. Anyone who cares to pay Mr. Murray their guinea will find that I have thrown the doors of my warehouse wide open and that all my learning is up for sale. My readers may stroll about and chuse at their leisure."

The last shall be first, as Clarke repeatedly suggests, and Jonathan Strange, the last man to attain mastery in English magic, is preeminent at novel's end. How John Uskglass (the first great English magician, though last to make an appearance here) shall figure in this, we do not yet know.

More complex than its already complicated story—Clarke's strange pattern of doublings and anticipations extends deeply into the novel's fabric—*Jonathan Strange & Mr. Norrell* speaks deeply of humanity's disconcerting encounters with near-humanity. It is the Matter of Mankind. ♦

Useful Idiots

Stalin's willing intellectuals.

BY ARNOLD BEICHMAN

Willi Münzenberg was a brilliant German revolutionary who became communism's successful promoter-organizer in the democratic world. His great achievement was the invention of the idea of the "popular front" in the 1930s—the era in which Western intellectuals adopted the slogan "no enemies on the left" and made Red-baiting a cardinal sin. Münzenberg's propaganda and organizing ideas on behalf of the Soviet Union, heavily financed by Moscow, reached everywhere. As a friend of Vladimir Lenin, whom he had known and admired before the Revolution, Münzenberg was appointed, writes Stephen Koch, "the *de facto* director of the Soviet Union's covertly directed propaganda operations in the West."

Double Lives
Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals
by Stephen Koch
Enigma, 421 pp., $18

Koch's *Double Lives: Stalin, Willi Münzenberg and the Seduction of the Intellectuals* is a treasure house of information about a time in which famous American and European intellectuals knowingly supported a murderous totalitarian regime in the name of democracy. In America, the Communist slogan became "Communism is Twentieth-Century Americanism," and banners so inscribed were mandatory exhibits during the Popular Front era. (There was even a ribald parody, composed no doubt by a Trotskyite, called "The Girl with the Popular Front.")

Münzenberg was an elected member of the Weimar Reichstag. After Hitler's coup d'etat in 1933, he fled to France where he lived until his mysterious death at the age of fifty-two in 1940 while the Soviet-Nazi Pact was in effect. I say mysterious because his decomposed body was found in a forest near Paris, at a time when both dictators would have wanted him dead but Stalin even more so. Around his neck was a noosed cord. Stalin believed that Münzenberg was a secret Trotskyite, says Koch, which undoubtedly led to his death.

Everybody (except Trotskyites) was welcome in the Popular Front. Münzenberg's appeal to intellectuals went like this: Of course, we disagree about capitalism, about minorities, about taxes, about a lot of things, but we can agree and work together to fight racism, fascism, and Nazism, even though we are Communists and you are not.

Then Münzenberg or his subordinates would produce the rabbit out of the magician's hat—an organization with secretaries, mimeograph machines, phones, meeting rooms, newspapers, magazines, publishing houses, the works, and above all, professional revolutionaries, fulltime, just as Lenin had demanded in his famous cookbook, *What Is To Be Done?* Koch shows that the seduction of the intellectuals helped the Soviet Union to an unimagined degree through espionage and systematic betrayal of America.

I can give firsthand experience about how Münzenberg's Popular Front worked. In the spring of 1936, a Communist friend phoned that several of his friends had decided to fight "reactionary" alumni associations by

Arnold Beichman, a research fellow at the Hoover Institution, is a columnist for the Washington Times.

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Enigma Books

Above: Willi Münzenberg (left) in Moscow, 1921. Below: Alger and Priscilla Hiss.

organizing a national liberal alumni association to be headquartered in New York. Since I had been editor in chief of the *Columbia Daily Spectator* a couple of years earlier, and since I was beginning a short career as a fellow-traveler, I was invited to the organizing meeting in some Manhattan Upper West Side hotel. I was delighted to see a few Columbia alumni plus about seventy-five alumni of other schools.

We organized ourselves on the spot as the "Progressive Intercollegiate Alumni Association." The chairman, a Methodist minister from Columbia's Teachers College, was already in place. Nobody thought of asking, least of all me, how the minister had become chairman. After a couple of biweekly meetings, at which we passed long-forgotten resolutions, I was told in a whisper after adjournment by a lady, the wife of a *Daily Worker* editor, that it had been decided to let the organization die. She had gone around to several individuals like myself and told them the party's over.

Well, I asked, who decided to let the organization die? No answer. The new approach, the lady told me, would be for members to join existing alumni associations and conduct the fight from within. Why should we disband when we were doing so well? I remonstrated. She didn't tell me that the party line had switched (on Moscow's orders) from Third Period confrontation to Popular Frontism. She turned away. I shouted back at her: "Shouldn't we at least have a meeting to discuss it?" No answer. "Well, I'm coming to the next meeting and will ask for a vote," I told her. She shrugged and kept walking.

I came to the next meeting prepared to fight but there was nobody there to fight with. I found two other hardy souls, both members of the Socialist party whom I had known at Columbia. We waited and waited, avoiding eye-contact. Finally the three of us departed rather embarrassed. It was a lesson on the power of the Communist party line.

I tell this story to reinforce the new edition of Koch's story of Willi Münzenberg and the amazing power Lenin and then Stalin exercised over intellectuals the world over through the Comintern branch offices that passed as various nations' unique Communist parties. The party commanded: Organize alumni into one organization. Done. The party commanded four months later: Do not organize alumni into one organization. Done.

This kind of thing could happen because even intellectuals like Leon Trotsky could profess at the Soviet Communist party Congress in 1924: "The party in the last analysis is always right because the party is the single historic instrument given to the proletariat for the solution of its fundamental problems. . . . I know that one must not be right against the party. One can be right only with the party, and through the party, for history has created no other road for the realization of what is right."

"A revolutionary," Stalin would later add, "is he who without arguments, unconditionally, openly and honestly . . . is ready to defend and strengthen the USSR, since the USSR is the first proletarian, revolutionary state in the world." Stalin's words legitimized a decision made somewhere at Communist party headquarters in lower Manhattan—interpreting somebody's orders in Moscow to mean that the Progressive Intercollegiate Alumni Association must be disbanded.

While Koch's book revolves around Münzenberg, he also tells the story of another Soviet agent named Otto Katz: How he exploited the "will-to-believe" of leading American intellectuals and artists, how he helped establish Stalinism as a moral force in the democracies, and how he turned these "useful idiot" Americans, especially in Hollywood, into cash cows for Stalinism. Otto Katz (aka André Simon) was only one of many Soviet agents who were brilliant in tactics and strategy, judging by Koch's narrative. Katz boasted, "Columbus discovered America but I discovered Hollywood." In the end his successes did him no good. He, like Münzenberg and other high apparatchiks paid the price: execution during one of Stalin's purges.

What Koch misses is Stalin's per-

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nicious "social fascism" thesis in 1928, which unquestionably helped Hitler's accession in 1933. In his desire to break the hold of the German Social Democratic party on the German working class, Stalin announced that socialists and fascists were one and the same. Overnight socialists in the Stalinist vocabulary became "social fascists," meaning that socialist democracy was the real enemy of the proletariat, not Nazism. Therefore there could be no united front with the German Socialists nor a joint general strike even though Stalin's rejection meant Hitler's triumph. In fact, so confident were the German Communists about the correctness of the Stalin line that they even coined a boastful slogan, "*Nach Hitler, kommen wir*": After Hitler, we will come.

Koch also documents the Nazi-Soviet collaboration almost from the beginning of Hitler's accession, a collaboration whose climax was the Nazi-Soviet Pact of August 1939, the Nazi-Soviet invasion of Poland, and the beginning of World War II. The Popular Front, says Koch, became, first, a smokescreen for Stalin's overtures to Hitler and, second, a smokescreen to blanket the Great Terror, the purges, and the Moscow Trials.

Koch's *Double Lives* is worth recommending to a new generation of readers. They will find it hard to believe that intelligent people like Beatrice and Sidney Webb could have written in praise of Stalin's driving millions of Russians from their homes and consigning them to a Siberian wasteland. Koch's book is a history of the recruitment of the "useful idiots" who believed in the purity and virtue of the Bolshevik government. We've read parts of this history in masterworks like Robert Conquest's *The Great Terror*, Richard Pipes's multivolume history of the Russian Revolution, and Harvey Klehr and John Earl Haynes's collaborative volumes about the American academy. But Koch's focus on the treason of the intellectuals is a major contribution to the history of an era whose like, we must pray, we will not see again. ♦

Ovid Redux

The Roman poet in translation.

BY CHRISTOPHER MCDONOUGH

Classical antiquity seemed on parade this past summer. The Olympic Games in the shadow of the Parthenon were almost enough to erase the unpleasant spectacle of Wolfgang Petersen's movie *Troy*—in which the wrath of Achilles came across as *Brad is mad, and this time it's personal.* And Hollywood isn't done with the ancient world yet. Within a few months, we're promised two big-screen Alexanders the Great, with Colin Farrell starring in Oliver Stone's version and Leonardo DiCaprio in the Baz Luhrmann vehicle.

Metamorphoses
by Ovid
translated by David Raeburn
Penguin, 723 pp., $11

Hollywood probably won't be taking a crack at Ovid anytime soon. The *Metamorphoses* would not make a good epic movie. For that matter, Ovid's classic treasury of classical mythology doesn't make a particularly good epic poem. Surfing through time and place, constantly shifting genre and tone, it is a maddeningly episodic work.

But, as the recent verse translation of the *Metamorphoses* by David Raeburn reminds us, the episodes are nearly all brilliantly memorable. Midas and the Golden Touch. Arachne turned into a spider. Europa seduced by Jupiter in the form of a bull. Orpheus turning around to see his wife. Swift Atalanta losing a race as she stoops for a golden apple. . . . Chances are, if you think of a Greek myth, it's actually Ovid's Latin version that comes to mind. The *Metamorphoses* is a rollicking work, suffused with a sensibility both comic and erotic, though it has a tendency to get overheated. As Lord Byron wrote in *Don Juan*, "Ovid's a rake, as half his verses show him"—and to be thought rakish by Byron is something, indeed.

The Roman poet proved too rakish for many in his own day as well. Ovid—Publius Ovidius Naso, to give his full Roman name—was born a little more than a year after Julius Caesar had been killed on the Ides of March, 44 B.C., and so grew up during the bloody Civil War between Mark Antony and Octavian. Once Octavian won, he took the name Augustus Caesar and became, among other things, the patron to the poets of Rome's Golden Age. The older luminaries of this set, particularly Virgil and Horace, embraced the necessary evil of Augustus' absolutism. Ovid, however, was younger and less favorably disposed to the emperor, who would end up exiling him to a remote village on the Black Sea. Ovid later made the cryptic claim that his crime had been *carmen et error*, "a poem and a mistake." What the mistake was is anybody's guess, but the poem was probably *The Art of Love*, a handbook of seduction which could very well have been subtitled, "How to Pick Up Chicks in Ancient Rome." It's not so much that the content of the book ran counter to the morality which Augustus had hoped to impose upon Roman society. The real problem was that, as an exercise in going from "bed to verse," it was very, very funny—and nothing provokes an autocrat more than a giggle. Ovid paid dearly for his wit: This most urbane of poets spent

Christopher McDonough is an assistant professor of classical languages and director of the humanities program at Sewanee University.

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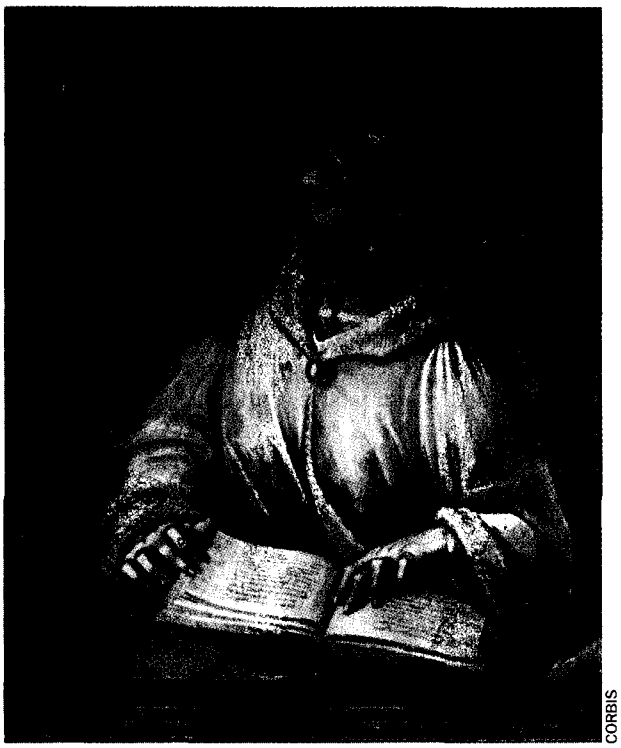

CORBIS

the rest of his life composing sophisticated poetry among a savage people who knew no Latin.

The Art of Love may have gotten Ovid in hot water, but it is his *Metamorphoses* that established his reputation. The British poet laureate Ted Hughes, just before he died in 1998, released his *Tales from Ovid*, a loose translation of the epic, which has since become a Broadway play. An excellent prose version by classicist Michael Simpson came out last year in paperback from the University of Massachusetts Press, and Norton released a translation into verse by poet Charles Martin this past winter.

Now Penguin has added another version. Where Charles Martin translated the Latin poetry into a good old iambic pentameter, David Raeburn has more daringly opted to render Ovid into English hexameter, a six-beat line that unfolds with a graceful though at times awkward grandeur. The hexameter is a long line, and often in this translation the verse runs over clumsily to the next line. Still, Raeburn's English suits the sound of Ovid, and throughout the epic, the translation captures the variable moods of the original. The *Metamorphoses* dashes from tale to tale, it is true, but it is also an epic of the emotions, ranging from the sublime to the repugnant and touching on every feeling in between.

Among the more repugnant episodes is the story of the Thracian king Tereus. At the urging of his wife, Procne, the king makes a long journey to recover her sister, Philomela, whom he rapes on the trip home. Fearing she might expose him to his wife, he tears out her tongue, a brutal moment Ovid describes thus (in Raeburn's translation):

Her tongue was still voicing her sense of outrage and crying her father's
name, still struggling to speak, when Tereus gripped it in pincers
and hacked it out with this sword. As its roots in the throat gave a flicker,
the rest of it muttered and twitched where it dropped on the blood-black earth;
and like the quivering tail of an adder that's chopped in half,
it wriggled and writhed its way to the front of its mistress' feet.

From the initial horror, the poetry snakes its way to an utterly preposterous literary conceit. To be sure, Philomela's wriggling tongue is a memorable image, but one cannot help but feel that Ovid has had just a little *too* much fun writing these lines. Even in antiquity, his poetry was criticized as self-indulgent, too often crossing the boundaries of good taste. The passage above is nothing less than an act of artistic cruelty.

Yet there is a singular charm to Ovid. There are few tales more poignant, for instance, than that of the old couple, Baucis and Philemon, who were tested by Jupiter and Mercury in disguise. Because the elderly pair alone had shown any hospitality to the gods, only their home was spared from the punitive flood which followed. When asked to name their reward, Baucis and Philemon responded that, since neither wanted to outlive the other, their only desire was to die at the same time. And so, at the final moment, it came to pass (Raeburn again):

both Philemon and Baucis
witnessed their partner sprouting leaves on their worn old limbs.
As the tops of the trees spread over their faces, they spoke to each other
once more while they could. "Farewell, my beloved!" they said in a single
breath, as the bark closed over their lips and concealed them for ever.
Still to this day the peasants of Phrygia point to the oak
and the linden nearby which once were the forms of Philemon and Baucis.

It had never occurred to me just how sweet that story was until I taught it one time at a local Senior Center. At the end of class, a woman took her husband's frail hand in her own, and as their fingers interlocked like spindly branches, she whispered, "That's what I would have wished for, too."

It is marvelous to think that, across the ages, the rakish old Roman could speak so directly to an old woman's deepest wish. Through the centuries, the *Metamorphoses* has exercised a continuous influence upon artists as scattered in time and space as Bernini, Dante, Shakespeare, and Kafka. When we look with wonder on Bernini's Apollo and Daphne, when we laugh at the follies in *A Midsummer Night's Dream*, when we recoil at the transformation of Gregor Samsa into a cockroach, we also pay tribute to Ovid's genius.

And no wonder: Ovid's vision of a world in flux permeates Western culture, and not just its literature. The *Metamorphoses* may be a storehouse of myth, but there was never a book more true to life. Moments of glory, Homeric or Olympic, are few and far between for most of us. Shuttling between identities and duties, we live our lives like figures from Ovid, in oddly juxtaposed episodes, certain of nothing and subject ever to change. ♦

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"You're kidding! When I was a boy, I never had to walk that far to school."

Books in Brief

Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood **by Susan Linn (New Press, 287 pp., $24.95).** My daughter will reach an important milestone on her next birthday, and I didn't even know it before reading *Consuming Kids*. She'll be putting "one foot in the adult world," according to advertising executives who have spent millions to get her attention. She'll be "on the cusp of a new phase in life," and will be "looking for ways to express" a "new sense of individuality and independence." She'll be six.

Once upon a time, it would have gone without saying that six-year-olds require protection until they achieve emotional maturity, not to mention critical judgment. Ah, but that was before the little lambs started wielding some serious purchasing power—and businesses rushed to fleece them. "Comparing the advertising of two or three decades ago to the commercialism that permeates our children's world is like comparing a BB gun to a smart bomb," writes psychologist Susan Linn in her account of the exploitation of this new consumer group. Schools, toy manufacturers, and food companies have all gotten into the act. It's a business that has more than doubled in the last decade to $15 billion a year, and advertisers seem to be getting their money's worth. Today's children—who, says Linn, spend almost forty hours a week with various media—are absorbing marketing messages before they can talk. According to a former CEO of Mattel, they start nagging for certain brands "almost as soon as their verbal skills set in."

In fact, corporations willingly fuel the age-old power struggle between parents and children, coming up with products designed to appeal to—and reinforce—children's drive for control. Some have even commissioned highly targeted studies that reveal how many nags a parent requires before caving in. One research consultant advises companies to invest in "relationship mining": the study of how to get parents to buy things for their children that they really don't want to buy.

The book's strongest chapters are on marketing in schools; alcohol, tobacco, and food advertising; the media's power to influence values; and the astounding levels of sex and violence found in children's entertainment. Not all the book is as good. Much of Linn's hand-wringing chapter on the First Amendment could have been painlessly edited out, as well as about half the references to childhood obesity being a national crisis. So, too, her repeated snide references to the "religious Right" and, indeed, anything remotely conservative. It was those mean old Republicans, you see, who deregulated children's programming in 1984 and then, a decade later, slashed funding for PBS, forcing public television to prostitute itself to those eager to market Clifford sippy cups.

In the chapter about sex as commodity, Linn is careful to list her credentials as a supporter of abortion, sex education, etc.—all before describing pornographic song lyrics, videos (which feature sexual situations about ninety-three times an hour), and even Barbies (yes, Virginia, there is a Lingerie Barbie). Really, does one have to be a card-carrying member of the vast right-wing conspiracy to find a problem with a six-year-old watching R-rated movies on the cable television in her room? The book closes with various ways to "end the marketing maelstrom," calling on policymakers to ban marketing to children (as other countries do) and increase funding for public schools, after-school programs, and, of course, PBS.

Linn asserts that "children are so assaulted by marketing that it has reached a point where parents can no longer cope with it alone." But some of her suggestions make one wonder if the battle is already lost. Do parents really need to be told to remove televisions from children's bedrooms? Apparently so. Over a quarter of children aged two and under have them. On average, children begin watching videos at six months and television at nine months. It's probably safe to say that they're not working the remote control by themselves.

—*Susie Currie*

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The latest report on Iraq's prewar weapons capacity produced a fiery exchange between President Bush and John F. Kerry on Thursday, with Bush asserting the report showed that Saddam Hussein was a danger even in the absence of weapons of mass destruction and Kerry charging that Bush had inflated the threat and was blind to evidence proving the war was a mistake.
—Washington Post, October 8, 2004

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TO: DCI
FROM: Stacie Fitzwilliam, Media Relations
DATE: October 5, 2004
RE: Key findings from the Comprehensive Report of the Special Adviser on Iraq's Weapons of Mass Destruction, followed by suggested talking points

met with al Qaeda, but just to plan a party for later recalled that they did discuss chemical centrifuges for producing uranium, but only "casually."

Saddam totally dominated the regime's strategic decision-making.
Who knew? Sure, it was called "The Republic of Iraq," but our investigation found that Saddam Hussein was actually a crazed dictator—and that everybody who worked for him was totally scared of him.

Saddam's primary goal from 1991 to 2003 was to have U.N. sanctions lifted, while maintaining the security of the regime.
Going in, we thought that Saddam just wanted to play nice and live at peace with his neighbors. But our agents on the ground in Iraq discovered that the guy was just cooling his heels, trying to look all compliant until the sanctions got lifted, and then BAM!

The introduction of the Oil-For-Food program (OFF) in late 1996 was a key turning point for the regime.
Well, in hindsight, we know that this program, which channeled millions of dollars a year through Saddam's regime, was a bad thing. But hey, even the best laid plans sometimes get screwed up. Here's the world thinking that babies in Baghdad are getting milk and Tylenol, and there's Saddam buying $2 billion worth of stuff for the army instead. And you'll never guess who was selling it to him.

The former regime had no formal written strategy or plan for the revival of WMD after sanctions.
Now, if you and I were going to reconstitute a WMD program after the U.N. lifted sanctions, we'd probably whip up a big strategic plan in a three-ring binder and give everyone copies of it. But not Saddam—he is one cool customer. Our intelligence from the field indicates that he didn't even do a PowerPoint presentation for his cabinet about his WMD revival program. We just finished translating some Post-It Notes that were stuck on his refrigerator, but they proved inconclusive.

Saddam wanted to end sanctions while preserving the capability to reconstitute his weapons of mass destruction (WMD) when sanctions were lifted.
Apparently $2 billion of humanitarian aid doesn't buy as much anthrax spore and Sarin precursor as it used to. So the end of sanctions would have allowed

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Three Cheers for the Electoral College

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The prospect of another close presidential election has some people demanding that the nation's Electoral College be reformed. It's one reason to hope that whichever party prevails this November does so decisively, to discourage any change in how America chooses its leaders.

At present, 270 electoral votes are required to win the presidency—each state's electoral count is the same as its congressional delegation (California, for example, with 53 House members and 2 senators, has 55 electoral votes). All but two states—Maine and Nebraska—award their electoral votes on a winner-take-all basis that does not take into account margin of victory. Thus there is room for controversy, such as that which occurred four years ago when George W. Bush earned 271 electoral votes to Al Gore's 266, despite Mr. Gore's winning the popular vote. It was the third time since the Civil War that the presidency has been decided by such a split verdict.

But **does the outcome four years ago—and the outside chance that the pattern could repeat itself this fall—merit a change to the Constitution?** The answer is a resounding no, when one considers many of the alternatives. Those include

1. *Popular vote.* Scrap the Electoral College: whichever candidate gets the most votes gets the top office.

2. *Popular bonus.* Retain the current system, but give the winner of the popular vote extra electoral votes as a reward for carrying a state's popular vote.

3. *Congressional districts.* Instead of winner-take-all, award electoral votes per congressional district (this is the system in effect in Maine and Nebraska).

4. *Proportional allocation.* Divide each state's electoral votes according to the popular vote (such a change is on the ballot in Colorado this November).

Unfortunately, America's smaller states stand to lose if any of these reforms take place. Candidates would spend more time in larger states where there are a greater number of votes and, potentially, greater rewards. Big states, with their large media markets, would dominate the fall campaign. That would make for a tactical and stylistic change: presidential elections based more on mass marketing in urban areas than on retail political skills in rural communities. Ironically, that's the polar opposite of how the two parties choose their nominees: sizing up candidates as they go door to door in small towns in Iowa and New Hampshire.

Over the past 200 years, some 700 proposals have been introduced in Congress to reform or eliminate the Electoral College. Instead, lawmakers should recognize the realities of these times: in the past three presidential elections, no candidate achieved 50 percent of the vote. Although he did lose the popular vote by 0.5 percent of the national total, Mr. Bush nevertheless carried 30 of the 50 states, 228 of the 435 congressional districts, and 2,480 counties to Mr. Gore's 674.

In this regard, **the Electoral College narrowly chose a winner based on his performance as the candidate with broader national appeal. Come to think of it, it is a *national* election, not a regional choice.**

—Bill Whalen

Bill Whalen is a research fellow at the Hoover Institution.

Paid for by the Hoover Institution, Stanford University

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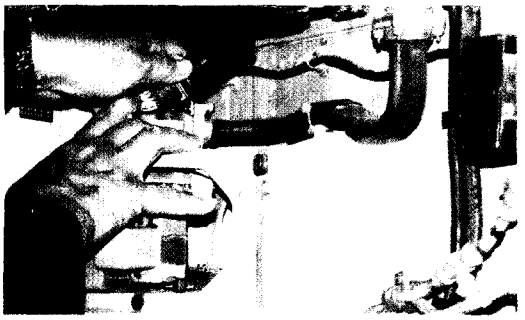
Joe Munoz
Lockheed Martin
Patuxent River, Maryland



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Today, Joe works at Lockheed Martin near Naval Air Station Patuxent River, Maryland, where he brings his in-depth knowledge and experience of Marine One logistics and program security to Team US101.

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